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DRAMAS AND TRAGEDIES OF CHIVALRIC FRANCE

LETTERS OF

MLLE. DE LESPINASSE

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Mlle. de Lespinasse

ROMANCES OF ROYALTY

LETTERS

OF

MLLE. DE LESPINASSE

WITH NOTES ON HER LIFE AND CHARACTER
BY D'ALEMBERT, MARMONTEL,
DE GUIBERT, ETC.

AND AN INTRODUCTION BY C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE

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INTRODUCTION.

By C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE.

The claims of Mlle. de Lespinasse to the attention of posterity are positive and durable. At the moment of her death she was universally regretted, as having, without name, without fortune, without beauty, created for herself the salon most in vogue, most eagerly frequented at an epoch which counted so many that were brilliant. Still, this flattering chorus of regrets given to the memory of the friend of d'Alembert would have left but a vague and presently receding idea of her, if the publication of her Letters, made in 1809, had not revealed her under an aspect wholly different, and shown, no longer the charming person dear to society, but the woman of heart and passion, the burning and self-consuming victim.

This volume of Letters from Mlle. de Lespinasse to the Comte de Guibert is one of the most curious and most memorable monuments to passion. In 1820 another volume, under the title of "Nouveaux Lettres de Mlle. de Lespinasse," was published, which is not hers; it is unworthy of her mind and of her heart; being as flat and insipid as the other is distinguished, or, to say it better, unique. I beg my readers not to confound that volume of 1820 (a speculation and fabrication of publishers) with the Letters given to the world in 1809, the only ones that deserve confidence, and of which I desire to speak.

These love-letters, addressed to M. de Guibert, were published by the widow of M. de Guibert, assisted in the work

by Barrère, the Barrère of the Terror, neither more nor less, who, as we know, loved literature, especially that of sentiment. When the Letters appeared there was great emotion in society, several of the friends of Mlle. de Lespinasse being still alive at that date. They deplored the indiscreet publication; they blamed the conduct of the editors, who thus dishonoured, they said, the memory of a woman until then respected, and betrayed her secret to all, without the right to do so. They appealed to both morality and decency; they invoked the very fame of Mlle. de Lespinasse. Nevertheless, they eagerly enjoyed the reading of the Letters, which far surpassed in interest the most ardent romances, being, in truth, a "Nouvelle Héloïse" in action. To-day posterity, indifferent to personal considerations, sees only the book, and classes it in the series of immortal paintings and testimonies of passion, of which there is not so great a number that we cannot count them. Antiquity gives us Sappho for certain accents, certain sighs of fire that come to us athwart the ages; it has given us the "Phædra" of Euripides, the "Magician" of Theocritus, the "Medea" of Apollonius of Rhodes, the "Dido" of Virgil, the "Ariadne" of Catullus. Among moderns we have the Latin Letters of Héloïse, those of the Portuguese nun, "Manon Lescaut," the "Phèdre" of Racine, and a few other rare productions, among which the Letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse are in the first rank. Oh! if the late Barrère had never done worse in his life than publish these Letters, if he had had no greater burden on his conscience we would say to-day, absolving him with all our heart, "May the earth lie light upon him!"

Here is an anecdote which I possess from the original. At the time when these Letters appeared, a brilliant society had gathered at the baths of Aix in Savoie. Some of the party had gone to visit Chambéry; on their return one of the

carriages was occupied by Mme. de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Mme. de Boigne, Adrien de Montmorency, etc. During the drive a series of accidents occurred — tempest, thunder and lightning, hindrances and delays of all kinds. On arriving at Aix the persons in the carriage found the people of the hotel grouped at the door, very anxious and inquiring. But they, the travellers, had seen nothing, and noticed nothing of the accidents without, for Mme. de Staël had talked the whole time, and her topic was the Letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse and M. de Guibert, who had been her own first lover.

The life of Mlle. de Lespinasse began early in being a romance, and more than a romance. She was the natural daughter of the Comtesse d'Albon, a lady of condition in Burgundy, whose legitimate daughter had married the brother of the Marquise du Deffand. It was at the house of this brother, the Marquis de Vichy-Chamrond, in Burgundy, that Mme. du Deffand found the young girl, then twenty years of age, oppressed, assigned to inferior domestic duties, and kept in a condition that was wholly dependent. She took a fancy to her at once; or rather, they took a fancy to each other, and we can readily conceive it; if we look only to the value of minds, it is seldom that chance brings together two more distinguished.

Mme. du Deffand had no peace until she had drawn the young girl from her province and installed her with herself at the convent of Saint-Joseph, as her companion and reader, intending to make of her a perpetual resource. The family of the young girl's mother had, however, a strong fear, namely: that she might profit by her new position and the protectors she would find in society to claim the name of Albon and her share of the inheritance. She might have done so, in fact; for she was born during the lifetime of M. d'Albon, the husband of her mother, and the law recognizes

all such children as legitimate. Mme. du Deffand thought it right to take precautions, and dictated to her, with little delicacy, certain conditions on this point before permitting her to come to her; for one who appreciated so well the young girl's mind it was knowing very little of her heart.

This arrangement of a life in common was made in 1754, and it lasted till 1764: ten years of household companionship and concord; a long period, longer than could have been hoped between two minds so equal in quality and associated with elements so impetuous. But finally, Mme. du Deffand, who rose late and was never afoot before six in the evening, discovered that her young companion was receiving in her private room, a good hour earlier, most of her own habitual visitors, thus taking for herself the first-fruits of their conversation. Mme. du Deffand felt herself defrauded of her most cherished rights, and uttered loud outcries, as if it were a matter of domestic robbery. The storm was terrible, and could only end in a rupture. Mlle. de Lespinasse left the convent of Saint-Joseph abruptly; her friends clubbed together to make her a salon and a subsistence in the rue de Belle-Chasse. These friends were d'Alembert, Turgot, the Chevalier de Chastellux, Loménie de Brienne, the future archbishop and cardinal, Boisgelin, Archbishop of Aix, the Abbé de Boismont, — in short, the flower of the minds of that day. This brilliant colony followed the emigrant spirit and her fortunes. From that moment Mlle. de Lespinasse lived apart and became, through her salon and through her influence on d'Alembert, one of the recognized powers of the eighteenth century.

Happy days! when all life turned to sociability; when all was arranged for the gentlest commerce of minds and for the best conversation. Not a vacant day, not a vacant hour! If you were a man of letters and more or less of a philosopher,

here is the regular employment you could make of your week: Sunday and Thursday, dinner with Baron d'Holbach; Monday and Wednesday, dinner with Mme. Geoffrin; Tuesday, dinner with M. Helvétius; Friday, dinner with Mme. Necker. I do not mention the Sunday breakfasts of the Abbé Morellet; those, I think, came a little later. Mlle. de Lespinasse, having no means to give dinners and suppers, was punctually at home from five to nine o'clock, and her circle assembled every day during those hours of the "early evening."

What she was as mistress of her salon and as a bond of society before, and even after, the invasion and delirium of her fatal passion, all the Memoirs of the time will tell us. She was much attached to d'Alembert, illegitimate like herself, who (like herself again) had proudly forborne to seek for rights which tenderness had failed to give him. D'Alembert was then lodging with his foster-mother, the worthy wife of a glazier, in the rue Michel-le-Comte, which was far from the rue de Belle-Chasse. A serious illness seized him, during which Mlle. de Lespinasse took care of him, induced the doctors to order him to live in better air, and finally decided him to come to her. From that day they made one household, but in all honour and propriety, so that no one ever gossiped to the contrary. D'Alembert's life became much easier, and the respect paid to Mlle. de Lespinasse was thereby increased.

Mlle. de Lespinasse was not pretty; but through mind, through grace, through the gift of pleasing, Nature had amply compensated her. From the first day when she came to Paris she seemed as much at her ease and as little provincial as if she had lived here all her life. She profited by the education of the excellent society that surrounded her, although she had little need to do so. Her great art in social life, one of the secrets of her success, was to feel the minds of others,

to make them shine, and to seem to forget herself. Her conversation was neither above nor below those with whom she talked; she had the sense of measurement, proportion, accuracy. She reflected so well the impressions of others, and received so visibly the effect of their minds, that others loved her for the success they felt they had with her. She raised this method to an art. "Ah! how I wish," she exclaimed one day, "that I knew everybody's weakness." D'Alembert fastened on the words and blamed them, as proceeding from too great a desire to please, and to please every one. But even in that desire, and in the means it suggested to her she remained true, she was sincere. She said of herself, in explanation of her success with others that she held the "truth of all [*le vrai de tout*], while other women held the truth of nothing [*le vrai de rien*]."

In conversing she had the gift of the right word, the instinct for the exact and choicest expression; common and trivial expressions disgusted her; she was shocked, and could not recover herself. She was not precisely simple, though very natural. It was the same with her clothes. "She gave," some one said, "an idea of richness which by taste and choice was vowed to simplicity." Her literary taste was more lively [*vif*] than sure; she loved, she adored Racine, as master of the heart, but for all that she did not like the over-finished, she preferred the rough and sketchy. Whatever caught her by an inward fibre excited and uplifted her; she could even have mercy on a worthless book for one or two situations in it which went to her soul. She has imitated Sterne in a couple of chapters which are worth little. As a writer, where she does not dream of being one, that is to say in her Letters, her pen is clear, firm, excellent, except for a few words such as *sensitive*, *virtuous*, which are repeated too often, and show the influence of Jean-Jacques.

But never any commonplaceness, never declamation; all is from the living spring, from nature.

Let us come at once to her principal claim, to her glory of loving woman. In spite of her tender friendship for d'Alembert, a friendship which was doubtless a little more at its origin, we may say that Mlle. de Lespinasse loved but twice in her life: she loved M. de Mora and M. de Guibert. It is the struggle of these two passions, the one expiring but powerful still, the other whelming-in and soon to be paramount, it is this violent and desperate combat which constitutes the heart-rending drama to which the publication of these Letters initiates us. The contemporaries of Mlle. de Lespinasse, her nearest and best informed friends knew nothing of it. Condorcet, writing to Turgot, often speaks of her and tells him of her nervous attacks, but without appearing to suspect their cause; those who, like Marmontel, divined some trouble, were wholly on the wrong scent as to dates and sentiments. D'Alembert himself, so concerned in seeing clearly, knew the mystery only on reading certain papers after her death. Therefore we must seek the truth as to the secret sentiments of Mlle. de Lespinasse from her own avowals, from herself alone.

She had loved M. de Mora for five or six years, when she met for the first time M. de Guibert. The Marquis de Mora was the son of the Comte de Fuentès, ambassador from Spain to the Court of France. All things prove that, although still young, he was a man of superior merit and destined to a great future had he lived. As to this, we have not only the assurance of Mlle. de Lespinasse, but that of others least subject to infatuation among his contemporaries; the Abbé Galiani, for instance, learning in Naples of his death, writes to Mme. d'Épinay (June 18, 1774): "I dare not speak of Mora. I have mourned him long. All is

destined in this world, and Spain was not worthy to possess a M. de Mora." And again (July 8th): "There are lives on which depend the fate of empires. Hannibal, when he heard of the defeat and death of his brother Hasdrubal, a man of greater worth than himself, did not weep, but he said, 'Now I know what will be the fate of Carthage.' I say the same on the death of M. de Mora."

M. de Mora came to France about the year 1766; it was then that Mlle. de Lespinasse knew him and loved him. He was absent at various times, but always returned to her. Finally, his lungs were attacked and his native climate was ordered for him. He left Paris, never to re-enter it, on Friday, August 7, 1772. Mlle. de Lespinasse, philosopher and freethinker none the less, was on one point as superstitious as any Spanish woman, as any loving woman; and she did not fail to note that having quitted Paris on a Friday, it was on a Friday also that he left Madrid (May 6, 1774), and that he died at Bordeaux on Friday, the 27th of the same month. When he left Paris the passion of Mlle. de Lespinasse for him and that which he returned to her had never been more ardent. An idea of it may be gained from the fact that during a journey which M. de Mora made to Fontainebleau in the autumn of 1771 he wrote twenty-two letters to her in ten days of absence. Matters were established on this tone, and the pair had parted with every promise and every pledge between them, when Mlle. de Lespinasse, in the month of September, 1772, met the Comte de Guibert for the first time, at Moulin-Joli, the country-house of M. Watelet.

M. de Guibert, then about twenty-nine years of age, was a young colonel for whom society had lately roused itself to a pitch of enthusiasm. He had recently published an "Essay on Tactics," preceded by a survey of the state of political and

military science in Europe. In it were generous, or as we should say in these days, *advanced* ideas. He discussed the great Frederick's system of war. He competed at the Academy on subjects of patriotic eulogy; he had tragedies in his desk on national subjects. "He aims at nothing less," said La Harpe, "than replacing Turenne, Corneille, and Bossuet." It would be very easy at this date, but not very just, to make a caricature of M. de Guibert, a man whom every one, beginning with Voltaire, considered at his dawn as vowed to glory and grandeur, and who kept the pledge so insufficiently. Abortive hero of that epoch of Louis XVI. which gave France naught but promises, M. de Guibert entered the world, his head high and on the footing of a genius; it was, so to speak, his speciality to have *genius*, and you will not find a writer of his day who does not use the word in relation to him. "A soul," they cried, "which springs on all sides towards fame."

This was an attitude difficult to maintain, and the fall, at last, was all the more bitter to him. Let us admit, however, that a man who could be loved to such a point by Mlle. de Lespinasse, and who, subsequently, had the honour of first occupying the heart of Mme. de Staël, must have had those eager, animated qualities which belong to personality, and mislead the judgment as to deeds so long as their *father* is present. M. de Guibert had the qualities that exhilarate, excite, and impress; he had his full value in a brilliant circle; but he chilled quickly and was out of place in the bosom of intimacy. In the order of sentiments he had the emotion, the tumult, the din of passion, but not its warmth.

Mlle. de Lespinasse, who ended by judging him as he was and by estimating his just weight without being able to cease loving him, began, in the first instance, by admiration. "Love," it is said, "begins usually by admiration, and it sur-

vives esteem with difficulty, or rather, it does not survive it, except in prolonging its existence by convulsions." Here, in her, is the history of that fatal passion; the degrees of which were so rapid that we can scarcely distinguish them. She was then (must we tell it?) nearly forty years old. She was bitterly regretting the departure of M. de Mora — that true man of delicacy and feeling, that truly superior man — when she involved herself in loving M. de Guibert, the false great man, but who was present and seductive. Her first letter is dated Saturday evening, May 15, 1773. M. de Guibert was about to start on a long journey through Germany, Prussia, and, possibly, Russia. We have his own printed "Relation" of this journey, and it is curious to put these witty, practical, often instructive and sometimes emphatic and sentimental notes side by side with the letters of his ardent friend. Before he departs he has already done her some wrong. He had said he would leave Tuesday, May 18th, then Wednesday, but he did not start till Thursday, the 20th, and his friend knew nothing of it. It is evident that she was not the one to receive his last thought, his last farewell. She suffers already, and blames herself for suffering; she has just received a letter from M. de Mora, full of confidence in her love; she is ready to sacrifice everything to him, "but," she adds, "for the last two months I have had no sacrifice to make to him." She thinks she still loves M. de Mora; that she can stop and immolate at will the new feeling which detaches and drags her away from him. M. de Mora absent, ill, faithful, writes to her, and each letter reopens her wound and quickens her remorse. What will it be when, returning to her, he falls ill and dies on his way at Bordeaux? Thus, until the end, we find her torn in her delirium between the need, the desire to die for M. de Mora, and the desire to live for M. de Guibert. "Do you conceive, *mon ami*, the species

of torture to which I am condemned? I have remorse for what I give you, and regrets for what I am forced to withhold." But this is only the beginning of it all.[1]

M. de Guibert, who is much in vogue, and something of a coxcomb, leaves behind him, when he goes upon his journey, more than one regret. We find there are two women, one whom he loves, who responds but little, the other who loves him, but does not occupy him much.

Mlle. de Lespinasse takes an interest in these persons, in one especially, and she tries to glide between the two. But what of that? when the heart loves utterly it is not proud, and she tells herself, with Félix in "Polyeucte,"—

> "I enter upon feelings that are not believable;
> Some I have are violent, others are pitiable,
> I have even some . . ."

She dares not conclude with Corneille, "some that are base." She asks to be given a place apart, for herself; she does not yet know what place.

"Let us decide our *ranks*," she says. "Give me my place, but, as I do not like to change, give me a good one. I do not wish that of this unhappy woman, who is displeased with you; nor that of the other, with whom you are displeased. I do not know where you will place me, but do so, if possible, that we may both be content: do not bargain; grant me much; you shall see that I will not abuse it. Oh! you shall see that I know how to love! I can but love, I know only how to love."

Here begins the eternal note, and it never ceases. To love

[1] The Letters are addressed throughout to "mon ami," which cannot here be translated as "my friend:" the consonants themselves forbid it, also the limited meaning of the English word in its general use. Consequently, the soft French word, with more love in it, is retained in the following translation.—Tr.

— that is her lot. Phædra, Sappho, and Dido had none more complete, more fatal. She deceives herself when she says: "I have a strength, or a faculty, which makes me equal to everything: it is that of knowing how to suffer, and to suffer much without complaint." She knows how to suffer, but she does complain, she cries aloud, she passes in the twinkling of an eye from exaltation to dejection: "What shall I say to you? the excess of my inconsistency bewilders my mind, and the weight of life is crushing my soul. What must I do? What shall I become? Will it be Charenton or the grave that shall deliver me from myself?"

She counts the letters she receives; her life depends on the postman: "There is a certain carrier who for the last year gives fever to my soul." To calm herself while waiting and expecting, to obtain the sleep that flees her, she finds nothing better than recourse to opium, of which we find her doubling the doses with the progress of her woe. What matters to her the destiny of other women, those women of society, who "for the most part feel no need of being loved; all they want is to be *preferred*"? As for her, what *she* wants is to be loved, or rather, to love, even without return: "You do not know all that I am worth; reflect that I can suffer and die; judge from that if I resemble those other women, who know how to please and amuse." In vain does she cry out now and then: "Oh! I hate you for giving me the knowledge of hope, fear, pain, pleasure; I did not need those emotions; why did you not leave me in peace? My soul had no need to love; it was filled by a tender sentiment, deep, and shared, *responded to*, though sorrowful in parting. It was the impulsion of that sorrow that took me to you; I meant that you should please me only, but you did more; in consoling me you bound me to you." In vain does she curse the violent feeling which has taken the place of an equable and gentler

sentiment; her soul is so grasped, so ardent that she cannot keep from transports, as it were, of intoxication: "I live, I exist with such force that there are moments when I find myself loving to madness and to my own misery."

So long as M. de Guibert is absent she restrains herself a little — if it can be called restraint. He returns, however, at the end of October, 1773, after being distinguished by the great Frederick and taking part in the manœuvres of the camp in Silesia; thus acquiring a fresh resplendency. Here, with a little attention, it is impossible not to note a decisive moment, a moment we must veil, which corresponds to that of the grotto in Dido's episode.[1] A year later, in a letter from Mlle. de Lespinasse dated midnight (1775) we find these words, which leave but little room for doubt: "It was on the 10th of February of last year (1774) that I was intoxicated by a poison the effect of which lasts to this day. . . ." She continues this delirious and doleful commemoration, in which the image, the spectre, of M. de Mora, dying on his way to her, mingles with the nearer and more charming image which wraps her in a fatal attraction.

From this moment passion is at its height, and there is scarcely a page in the Letters that is not all flame. Scrupulous persons, though they read and relish them, blame M. de Guibert severely for not having returned them to Mlle. de Lespinasse, who frequently asked for them. It appears, in

[1] Her letters do not seem to bear out this conclusion. The close intimacy with the personality of a writer that comes, in the work of translation, from the necessary scrutiny of his or her words and thoughts and habitual method of expressing them gives — to the translator at least — ground for doubting this opinion. It may be true; but a Frenchman's mind, even that of Sainte-Beuve, seems unable to escape from this line of judgment. If it is not true, the soul's tragedy is far greater. Mlle. de Lespinasse uses plain, clear language, which reveals the passion of her nature simply; when she speaks of "remorse" for her infidelity to M. de Mora, she is expressing the extreme, perhaps excessive, honour, delicacy, and sensitiveness of her spirit. — Tr.

fact, that order and attention were not among the number of M. de Guibert's good qualities; he takes no care of his friend's letters: he mingles them with his other papers, he drops them from his pocket by mistake, while at the same time he forgets to seal his own. Sometimes he returns them to her, but among the number returned some are not hers! In that we see M. de Guibert undisguised. Nevertheless, I do not know why he should be held responsible and guilty to-day for the pleasure we derive from these Letters. He doubtless returned many, and many were destroyed. But Mlle. de Lespinasse wrote many. It is but a handful, preserved by chance, which have come to us. What matter? the thread of the story is there, and it suffices. Throughout, they are almost one and the same letter, ever novel, ever unexpected, beginning afresh.

Amid their anguish, their plaints, one word, the divine eternal word, returns again and again and redeems all. Here is one of her letters in two lines which says more than many words: —

"From every instant of my life, 1774.

"*Mon ami*, — I suffer, I love you, I await you."

It is very rare in France to meet (pushed to this degree) with the class of passion and "sacred ill" of which Mlle. de Lespinasse was the victim. This is not a reproach that I make — God forbid! — to the amiable women of our nation; it is a simple remark, which others have made before me. A moralist of the eighteenth century who knew his times, M. de Meilhan, has said, "In France, great passions are as rare as great men." M. de Mora declared that even the Spanish women could not enter into comparison with his friend. "Oh! they are not worthy to be your pupils," he tells her constantly; "your soul was warmed by the sun of Lima, but

my compatriots seem born beneath the snows of Lapland." And it was from Madrid that he wrote it! He found her comparable to none but a Peruvian, daughter of the Sun. "To love and suffer," she cries, "Heaven or Hell; to that I would vow myself; it is *that* I would feel; *that is the climate I desire to inhabit;*" and she pities the women who live and vegetate in a milder air and flirt their fans around her. "I have known only the climate of Hell, rarely that of Heaven." "Ah! my God!" she says again, "how natural passion is to me, and how foreign is reason! *Mon ami,* never did any one reveal herself with such abandonment." It is this abandonment, this total unreserve which is the interest and the excuse of the mental situation, the sincerest and the most deplorable that ever betrayed itself to the eye.

This situation of soul is so visibly deplorable that we may look upon it, I think, without danger; so inherent is the sense of malady, so plainly do delirium, frenzy, agony disclose themselves pell-mell. While admiring a nature capable of this powerful manner of feeling, we are tempted as we read to pray that Heaven would turn from us and from those we love so invincible a fatality, so terrible a thunderbolt. I shall try to note the course of this passion, as much, at least, as it is possible to note down that which was irregularity and contradiction itself.

Before the journey of M. de Guibert to Germany, Mlle. de Lespinasse loved him, but had not yielded to her love. She admired him, she was filled with enthusiasm, already she suffered cruelly and made poison of everything. He returns, she intoxicates herself, she yields; then follows remorse; she judges him correctly; she sees with terror his indifference; she sees him as he is — a man of flourish, of vanity, of success; not a man for intimacy, having, above all, a need for

expansion; excited, animated by things from without, but never deeply emotional.

But of what use is it to become clear-sighted? Did a woman's mind, great as it may be, ever check her heart? "The mind of most women serves to strengthen their folly rather than their reason!" La Rochefoucauld says that, and Mlle. de Lespinasse proves the truth of it. She continued to love M. de Guibert, all the while judging him. She suffers more and more; she appeals to him and chides him with a mixture of irritation and tenderness: "Fill my soul, or cease to torture it; make me to love you always, or to be as though I had never loved you — in short, do the impossible; calm me, or I die!"

Instead of that, he harms her; with his natural carelessness he finds a way to wound even her self-love. She compares him to M. de Mora; she blushes for him, for herself, at the difference between them: "And it is you who have made me guilty towards that man! the thought revolts my soul, and I turn away from it." Repentance, hatred, jealousy, remorse, contempt of herself, and sometimes of him — she suffers at all moments the tortures of the damned. To deaden them, to distract her mind, to make truce with her sufferings, she has recourse to many things. She tries "Tancrède," which touches her; she thinks it beautiful, but nothing is on the key of her own soul. She has recourse to opium to suspend her life and numb her sensibilities. Sometimes she makes a resolution to no longer open the letters she receives; she keeps one, sealed, for six days. There are days, weeks, when she thinks herself almost cured, restored to reason, to calmness; she extols reason and its sweetness; but her calmness is merely an illusion. Her passion counterfeited death only to revive more ardent, more inflamed than ever. She regrets no longer her de-

ceitful, insipid calmness. "I lived," she says, "but I seemed to be apart from myself." She tells M. de Guibert that she hates him, but we know what that means: "You know well that when I hate you it is that I love you to a degree of passion that overthrows my reason."

Her life is thus passed in loving, hating, fainting, reviving, dying; that is to say, in ever loving. Each crisis ends by a pardon, a reconciliation, a closer and more violent clasp. M. de Guibert thinks of his fortune and his establishment; she concerns herself with them for his sake. Yes, she concerns herself about his marriage. When he marries (for he has the face to marry in the very midst of this passion) she takes an interest in it; she praises the young wife, whom she meets. Alas! it may be to that generous praise that we owe the preservation of these Letters, which ought in those rival hands to have been annihilated. It might be supposed that this marriage of M. de Guibert would end all; the noble, demented soul thinks so herself; but no! passion laughs at social impossibilities and barriers. She continues, therefore, in spite of all, to love M. de Guibert, without asking more of him than to let himself be loved. After many struggles, the last day finds their intercourse restored as though nothing had been broken between them. But she feels herself dying; she redoubles the use of opium; she desires to live only from day to day, without a future — has passion a future? "I feel the need of being loved to-day, and only to-day; let us blot from our dictionary the words 'always' and 'forever.'"

The last of these Letters are but a piercing cry, with rare intermissions. One could scarcely imagine into what inexhaustible forms she puts the same sentiment; the river of fire o'erflows at every step in flashing torrents. Let us give the summary in her own language: —

"All these many contradictions, these many impulses are true, and three words explain them: *I love you.*"

Remark that amid this life of exhaustion and delirium, Mlle. de Lespinasse is in society; she receives her friends as usual; she amazes them at times by her variable humour, but they attribute this change to her regrets at the absence, and then at the death, of M. de Mora. "They do me the honour to believe that I am crushed by the loss that I have met with." They praised her and admired her for it, which redoubled her shame. Poor d'Alembert, who lived in the same house, endeavoured vainly to console her, to amuse her; he never comprehended why she repulsed him now and then with a sort of horror. Alas! it was the horror she felt at her own dissimulation with such a friend. The long agony had its ending at last. She died on the 23d of May, 1776, at the age of forty-three years and six months. Her passion for M. de Guibert had lasted for more than three years.

Amid this consuming passion, which seems as though it could admit no other element, do not suppose that these Letters fail to show the charming mind which was joined to this noble heart. What delicate jesting as she writes of the "good" Condorcet, the Chevalier de Chastellux, Chamfort, and others of her society! What grace! Lofty and generous sentiments, patriotism and virility of views, are revealed in more places than one, and make us appreciate the worthy friend of Turgot and of Malesherbes. When she talks with Lord Shelburne she feels what is grand and vivifying for thought in being born under a free Government: "How can we not be grieved at being born under a Government like ours? As for me, weak and unhappy creature that I am, if I were born again, I would rather be the lowest member of the House of Commons than the King of Prussia

himself." Little disposed as she was to augur any good of the future, she has a moment of transport and hope when she sees her friends made ministers and putting their hands bravely to the work of public regeneration. But even then, what is it that preoccupies her most? She orders her letters from M. de Guibert to be brought to her wherever she may be, — at Mme. Geoffrin's, at M. Turgot's even, at table, and during dinner. "What are you reading so earnestly?" asked a neighbour, the inquisitive Mme. de Boufflers. "Is it some paper for M. Turgot?" "Precisely, madame," she replies; "it is a memorial I must give him presently, and I wish to read it before I give it to him."

Thus, all things in her life relate to passion, all things bring her back to it; and it is passion alone which gives us the key to this strange heart and struggling destiny. The incalculable merit of the Letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse is that we do not find in them what we find in books and novels; here we have the pure drama of nature, such as it reveals itself, now and then, in certain gifted beings; the surface of life is suddenly torn apart and the life itself is bared to us. It is impossible to encounter such beings, victims of a sacred passion and capable of so generous a woe, without being moved to a sentiment of respect and admiration in the midst of the profound pity which they inspire. Nevertheless, if we are wise we shall not envy them; we shall prefer a calmer interest, gently quickened; we shall cross the Tuileries (as she did one beautiful sunny morning) and say with her: "Oh! how lovely! how divine this weather! the air I breathe is calming — I love, I regret, I desire, but all those sentiments have won the imprint of sweetness and melancholy. Ah! this manner of feeling has greater charm than the ardour and throes of passion! Yes,

I believe I am disgusted with them; I will no longer love so forcibly; I will love gently —" Yet a moment later she adds, "but never feebly." The pangs are seizing her again. Ah, no! those who have tasted that poison once are never cured.

NOTES

ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF MLLE. DE LESPINASSE.

THE mysteries surrounding Mlle. de Lespinasse from her birth to her grave, and beyond it, have given rise to so many false conjectures that it seems well to bring together the undoubted facts of her life, disengaged from such conjectures and from those statements of her nearest friends which are now known to have been mistaken.

The following Notes are taken from the Introduction written by M. Eugène Assé for his edition of the "Letters" published in 1876, and from the letters and other writings of her friends published in the same volume, also from: —

The "Œuvres" of d'Alembert. Paris. An xiii (1805).

The "Mémoires" of Marmontel. Paris. 1804.

The "Correspondence Littéraire" of La Harpe and of Grimm. Paris. 1804 and 1830.

The "Œuvres" of Condorcet. Paris. 1847–9.

The "Mémoires" of the Abbé de Morellet.

The "Œuvres" of Mme. de Staël.

The "Tombeau de Mlle. de Lespinasse," edited by the Bibliophile Jacob (M. Paul Lacroix). 1879.

Julie-Jeanne-Éléonore de Lespinasse was born at Lyon on the 18th of November, 1732. It was not without good reason that she compared her birth and her early years to the most affecting pages of the novels of Richardson or the Abbé

Prévost. She owed her life to a guilty connection formed by the Comtesse d'Albon; and it was only by concealing, at least from strangers, the secret of this origin that her mother was able to keep her with her and to treat her, if not publicly, at any rate in reality, as her daughter, and perhaps as her best-loved child.

About this mystery which surrounded the life and youth of Mlle. de Lespinasse, her contemporaries gathered only uncertain and often contradictory rumours. Grimm, and even La Harpe and Marmontel, who knew her intimately, do not agree in their narratives. At the period when they wrote nothing was clearly known of those early years; to-day it is otherwise, and the testimony of Mme. du Deffand, a connection of the d'Albon family, and that of M. de Guibert, who not only received the confidences of Mlle. de Lespinasse, but to whom she read the narrative she had herself written on this period of her life, enable us to rectify all errors.

Mlle. de Lespinasse was brought up by her mother, from whom she received a solid and even brilliant education, as to which all her contemporaries are agreed. The tenderness of the mother went so far as to think of having her recognized as a legitimate daughter. Mme. du Deffand, relating, in a letter to the Duchesse de Luynes, her first meeting with the young girl at the château de Chamrond, belonging to her (Mme. du Deffand's) brother, the Marquis de Vichy-Chamrond, who had married the legitimate and eldest daughter of Mme. d'Albon, speaks of her as "a person who has no relatives who acknowledge her, or at any rate none who will, or ought to acknowledge her. This," she adds, "will show you her position. I found her at Chamrond, where she has lived since the death of Mme. d'Albon (the mother of my sister-in-law), who had brought her up and, in spite of her youth, had given her marks of the greatest friendship." Elsewhere she says

that the girl had passed her early years with the son of Mme. d'Albon, the Vicomte d'Albon. We may suppose that those years were spent in the ancient manor of Avranches, situated on the road from Roanne to Lyon, a patrimonial domain of the d'Albons which her mother, the last representative of that branch of the family, inherited from her father, the Marquis de Saint-Forgeux, in 1729.

The painful and almost tragic scenes which, it is only too true, darkened the young girl's youth, took place undoubtedly during the first months after her mother's death and, more especially, during the five years from 1747 to 1752, which she passed at Chamrond with the Marquise de Vichy, legitimate daughter of the Comtesse d'Albon. The young girl had accepted the proposal to live there, believing that she would be treated as a friend. She was almost immediately made governess to the children, three in number, the eldest being scarcely eight years old. But the bitterness of her position came much less from the humble duties she was required to perform than from the manner in which she was treated. When Mme. du Deffand went to pass the summer of 1752 at Chamrond with her brother and sister-in-law, she noticed the intelligence and the charm of Mlle. de Lespinasse, and was also struck by the air of sadness which dimmed her face. Soon she obtained her confidence. "She told me," says Mme. du Deffand, "that it was no longer possible for her to remain with M. and Mme. de Vichy; that she had long borne the harshest and most humiliating treatment; that her patience was now at an end, and for more than a year she had declared to Mme. de Vichy that she must go away, being unable to bear any longer the scenes that were made to her daily."

Nevertheless, the conduct of Mlle. de Lespinasse on the death of her mother had been such as ought to have won her

not only the esteem and respect, but the affection of those who, by blood if not by law, were her brother and sister. Put in possession of a large sum of money by her dying mother, who intended to have secured to her a rich future, she had generously and spontaneously given it to the Vicomte d'Albon, thus reducing herself to the modest income of a hundred crowns left to her by the will of her mother.

Mlle. de Lespinasse had resolved to fling herself into a convent rather than remain longer with the Vichys, when Mme. du Deffand, now nearly blind and seeking a companion, proposed to the young girl to live with her in Paris, in that convent of Saint-Joseph which, with nothing cloistral about it, served (like the Abbaye-aux-Bois in our own day) as a decent but very worldly retreat for a small number of women of rank, in which each had her separate and independent suite of rooms. It was in October, 1752, that Mme. du Deffand made this proposal to Mlle. de Lespinasse, but it was not until sixteen months later, in April, 1754, that the latter was able to accept an offer she had welcomed eagerly. She spent those months in a convent at Lyon, under the friendly eye and protection of Cardinal de Tencin. The delay was caused by futile efforts to obtain the consent of the Vicomte d'Albon and Mme. de Vichy to the new arrangement. Filled with incurable distrust, the brother and sister refused to sanction a project which they regarded as a menace to their prosperity; although Mme. du Deffand had taken upon herself the care of avoiding that danger by exacting from Mlle. de Lespinasse a pledge never to use her new position to establish her rights to the name and to a share in the fortune of the d'Albon family. The following extracts from the letters of Mme. du Deffand throw light on this period: —

From Mme. la Marquise du Deffand to Mlle. de Lespinasse.

Paris, February 13, 1754.

I am very glad, my queen, that you are satisfied with my letters and also with the course which you have taken towards M. d'Albon. I am convinced that he will resolve on securing you a pension; he would be stoned by every one if he did otherwise. In case he refuses, you obtain entire freedom to follow your own will, which I trust will bring you to live with me. But examine yourself well, my queen, and be very sure that you will not repent. In your last letter you wrote me very tender and flattering things; but remember that you did not think the same only two or three months ago; you then confessed to me that you were frightened at the dull life I made you foresee, — a life which, although you are accustomed to it, would be more intolerable in the midst of the great world than it has been in your seclusion; you feared, you said, to fall into a state of discouragement, which would render you intolerable, and inspire me with disgust and repentance. Those were your expressions; you thought them a fault which required my pardon, and you begged me to forget them; but, my queen, it is not a fault to speak our thoughts, and explain our dispositions; on the contrary, we can do nothing better. . . . I shall treat you not only with politeness, but even with compliments before the world, to accustom it to the consideration it ought to have for you. . . . I shall not have the air of seeking to introduce you; I expect to make you desired; and if you know me well, you need have no anxiety as to the manner in which I shall treat your self-love. But you must rely on the knowledge that I have of the world. . . .

There is a second point on which I must explain myself to you; it is that the slightest artifice, or even the most trifling little art, if you were to put it into your conduct, would be intolerable to me. I am naturally distrustful, and all those in whom I detect slyness become suspicious to me to the point of no longer feeling the slightest confidence in them. I have two intimate friends, Formont and d'Alembert; I love them passionately, but less for their agreeable charms and their friendship for me than for their absolute truthfulness. Therefore, you must, my queen, resolve to live with me with the utmost truth and sincerity, and never

use insinuation, nor any exaggeration; in a word, never *deviate*, and never lose one of the greatest charms of youth, which is candour. You have much intelligence, you have gaiety, you are capable of feelings; with all these qualities you will be charming so long as you let yourself go to your natural impulse, and are without pretension and without subterfuge. . . .

March 29, 1754.

. . . Another favour I have to ask of you (and it is the most important of all), namely: not to come to me unless you have totally forgotten who you are, and unless you have made a firm resolution never to think of changing your civil state. It would be perfidy to make use of my friendship to cover me with shame, to expose me to the blame of all honourable persons, to make my family my relentless enemies. The slightest attempt of this kind that you might make while living with me would be an unpardonable crime. I hope, my queen, that you have no need to consult yourself again on this point. It is long since you promised me all I could desire on this subject. I am perfectly certain that any such attempt would be in vain; but it would, none the less, be dreadful for me if you made one, and I repeat that I should never forgive it. . . .

April 8, 1754.

. . . I hope, my queen, that I shall have no reason to repent what I do for you; and that you will not come to me unless you are fully decided to make no attempt [to change your social state]. You know but too well how useless such efforts are; but in future, when living with me, they would be fatal to you, for the grief they would cause me would draw down upon you powerful enemies, and you would find yourself in a state of abandonment in which there would be no resource.

That said, there remains only to tell you of the joy I shall have in seeing you and in living with you. I shall write at once to M. le Cardinal to beg him to start you from Lyon as soon as possible. . . .

Adieu, my queen; pack your trunks and come to be the happiness and consolation of my life; it does not depend on me to make it reciprocal.

Mlle. de Lespinasse was twenty-two years of age when she came to take the situation thus foreshadowed. Mme. du Deffand was fifty-seven, and already nearly blind. Long since celebrated for her wit, she was beginning to be so for her salon, where, side by side with men of letters, were found all that aristocracy could then present that was most distinguished for taste and intellect. Mlle. de Lespinasse, on her first entrance to a world so new to her, was not out of place. Her tact, her intelligence won all suffrages; we find the proof of it in the praises bestowed upon her by such good judges as the Chevalier d'Aydie, the Prince de Beauvau, and Président Hénault. The qualities she may have lacked she soon acquired by contact with the most polished society that ever existed. "See what an education I received!" she says herself. "Mme. du Deffand, Président Hénault, the Abbé Bon, the Archbishop of Toulouse, the Archbishop of Aix, M. Turgot, M. d'Alembert, the Abbé de Boismont, — these are the persons who taught me to speak and to think, and who have deigned to consider me as something."

This life in common lasted ten years, from 1754 to 1764. Begun under such auspices, for what reason did it become a burden to the one who proposed it and to the other who accepted it? How came it to end in an open rupture which had all the importance of an event, and actually divided, almost into two camps, the society of that day? Evidently there were faults on both sides: Mme. du Deffand abusing the superiority which her rank and her rôle as protectress gave her over Mlle. de Lespinasse; and the latter allowing, little by little, indifference and coldness to take the place of her early interest and zeal. But the true determining cause of the rupture was the rivalry, the jealousy perhaps, which grew up between the two women. We recall Mme. du Deffand's words in the foregoing letter: "There is a point on

which I must explain myself to you. The slightest artifice, even the most trifling little art, in your conduct would be intolerable to me."

That art, that artifice, Mlle. de Lespinasse was guilty of in the eyes of her protectress — let us use the true word, mistress — on the day when she received in her own little room, privately and, as it were, secretly, the most illustrious friends of the marquise, Turgot, Marmontel, d'Alembert, — d'Alembert of all others! the favourite of Mme. du Deffand! When the latter, who slept till evening wearied with her late hours, discovered this fact her anger broke forth into violent reproaches. "It was nothing less to her mind," says Marmontel, "than treachery; she uttered loud outcries, accusing the poor girl of stealing her friends, and declaring she would no longer warm that serpent in her bosom."

This abrupt separation left Mlle. de Lespinasse without resources, reduced to the paltry income of a hundred crowns which her mother had left her in her will. But she had friends, and they did not fail her. Not only did d'Alembert (whom Mme. du Deffand compelled to choose between herself and Mlle. de Lespinasse) not hesitate to boldly take the part of the latter, not only did all those who might be called her intimates — Turgot, Chastellux, Marmontel, the Comte d'Anlézy, the Duchesse de Châtillon — stand by her, without at the same time breaking wholly with her rival, but the special friends of Mme. du Deffand, those who remained with her to the last, did not refrain from giving to Mlle. de Lespinasse the most touching and practical marks of interest. It was felt, moreover, that she was already a power, and society desired not to quarrel with a rising sovereign.

"All the friends of Mme. du Deffand," says Marmontel, "became hers. It was easy to convince them that the anger of the former was unjust. Président Hénault himself de-

clared for her. The Duchesse de Luxembourg blamed her old friend openly, and made a present to Mlle. de Lespinasse of the complete furniture of the apartment she had hired; and the Duc de Choiseul obtained for her from the king an annual sum which put her above actual need."

In quitting Mme. du Deffand, Mlle. de Lespinasse did not exile herself from the faubourg Saint-Germain; she established her new home not far from the convent of Saint-Joseph, in the street, and close to the convent, of Belle-Chasse. Installed in this apartment, which, though modest, must have been almost vast to receive the visitors who pressed there in greater numbers daily, she was not long alone; a year later d'Alembert joined her, thus associating his life definitely with that of a woman whom he had loved for eight years, and by whom he thought himself beloved.

"They lived very far apart," says Marmontel; "and though in bad weather it was difficult for d'Alembert to return at night from the rue de Belle-Chasse to the rue Michel-le-Comte, where his foster-mother lived, he never thought of quitting the latter until he fell ill of putrid fever, for which the first remedy is pure and free air. His physician, Bouvard, became uneasy and declared to us that his present lodging might be fatal to him. Watelet offered him his house near the boulevard du Temple; there he was taken, and Mlle. de Lespinasse, in spite of all that might be said or thought, went to nurse him. No one, however, thought or said anything but good of her action. D'Alembert recovered, and then, consecrating his life to her who had taken care of him, he went to live in the same house. Nothing more innocent than their intimacy, therefore it was respected; malignity itself never attacked it; and the consideration which Mlle. de Lespinasse enjoyed, far from suffering any shock, was only the more honourably and publicly established."

We must not exaggerate the character of this union, which was restricted solely, on the part of d'Alembert, to "lodging in the same house," in which there were ten other families, Mlle. de Lespinasse always maintaining her separate suite of rooms.

The question here arises as to the nature of d'Alembert's feelings for his friend. "Oh! you," he cries after her death, "whom I have so tenderly and constantly loved, and by whom I believed that I was loved." Elsewhere he speaks of his "heart which has never ceased to be hers." And yet in spite of these protestations of love, he rejects, in a letter to Voltaire, the very idea of his marriage: "The person to whom they marry me, in the gazettes, is in truth a most estimable person in character, and formed by the charm and sweetness of her society to make a husband happy. But she is worthy of a better establishment than mine, and there is between us neither marriage nor love, only reciprocal esteem and all the gentleness of friendship."

Member of the Academy of Sciences, and also of the French Academy, the perpetual secretary of which he soon became, and the recognized chief of the Encyclopedists, d'Alembert was not so bad a match as he chooses to say. The truth is that the love of poor d'Alembert for his friend was never without a rival; first, the Marquis de Mora, whose memory rent her soul with regret and remorse, and last, the Comte de Guibert, who, by the passion he inspired, brought her life to its close in weakness and misery.

When Mlle. de Lespinasse, ceasing to be a dependent in the shadow of Mme. du Deffand, opened her rival salon in the rue de Belle-Chasse, she was thirty-two years old, with little or no beauty, but a face of astonishing mobility, on which could be read the emotions of her soul, with, above all, a suddenness of impressions, a vivacity and charm of

mind which created around her a sort of atmosphere of enthusiasm and sympathy. Such are the chief features of the portrait which her contemporaries have left of her. La Harpe speaks of her as a person "well-made, with an agreeable face before the small-pox spoilt it." "She was tall and well-formed," says M. de Guibert. "I did not know her until she was thirty-eight years of age, but her figure was still noble and full of grace. But what she possessed, and what distinguished her above all else, was that first and greatest charm of all, without which beauty is but a cold perfection, the charm of an expressive countenance; hers had no special character; it united all." But, as often happens to persons for whom the trials of life begin early, one thing was lacking to Mlle. de Lespinasse, namely, the look of youth, in which happiness plays so great a part. "Her face," says Grimm, "was never young."

But her soul was — ever. To Marmontel it seemed "an ardent soul, a fiery nature, a romantic imagination." "She was born," says Grimm, "with nerves that were marvellously sensitive. But that sensibility, which gave passion such grasp upon her, made her also accessible to all generous emotions — enthusiasm for the noble and the good, indignation at the bad and the mean." "She was of all styles," says Guibert; "the lover of what was good! How she enjoyed, how she knew how to praise that which pleased her, above all, that which touched her!" These qualities had their reverse, namely: infatuation and variability. D'Alembert reproaches her for too ready a credulity, especially when sentiments of a specially tender nature were in question. She herself speaks of that "mobility of soul of which they accuse me," and admits it.

Such was her soul. As for her mind: all was natural, spontaneous, of an elegant simplicity as far removed from

commonplaceness as from studied elegance; the most perfect harmony existed between thought and expression; she had a solid education, leaving more to divine than was shown; a smiling good sense rather than a downright, open gaiety; and finally, a tact so perfect that she seemed to have the secret of all natures and all susceptibilities. These were her salient traits, her most seductive endowments. D'Alembert dwells particularly on this exquisite tact: "What distinguishes you above all," he says to her, "is the art of saying to each that which suits him; this art, though little common, is very simple in you; it consists in never speaking of yourself to others, but much of them." "I have never known," says La Harpe, "a woman who had more natural wit, less desire to show it, and more talent in showing to advantage that of others." And Marmontel adds his word: "One of her charms was the ardent nature that impassioned her language and communicated to her opinions the warmth, the sympathy, the eloquence of feeling. Often, too, with her, reason grew playful; a gentle philosophy allowed itself light jesting."

We can easily comprehend the influence that such qualities of heart and mind must have had on the society of that period. And if we add to this personal influence of Mlle. de Lespinasse that (which was very great) of d'Alembert, the recognized leader of the philosophic party, who added to his fame as a learned man a literary renown which made the French Academy choose him as its perpetual secretary, we shall form a correct idea of what the salon of Mlle. de Lespinasse was — more literary than that of the Marquise du Deffand, more aristocratic than that of the bourgeoise Mme. Geoffrin. The dinners and suppers, which held so great a place in the fame of the Mæcenases of that day, counted for nothing in the celebrity of the salon in the rue de Belle-

Chasse. There, people talked from five o'clock to ten o'clock daily. We may say that for twelve years, from 1764 to 1776, there was not a day when the choicest society failed to be there, and not a day when Mlle. de Lespinasse failed to receive it. Not for all the world would her friends have missed these daily festivals of intellect, grace, and elegance.

Other salons had their habitual guests, their reigning and dominating friends: with Mme. du Deffand were Président Hénault, Pont de Veyle, the Prince de Beauvau, the Choiseuls, and Horace Walpole, on his too rare journeys to Paris; with Mme. Geoffrin, Marmontel and Antoine Thomas; with the Baron d'Holbach, Diderot and Grimm; but with Mlle. de Lespinasse it was not even d'Alembert who reigned. In her salon alone were received on a footing of perfect equality, without marked preference, all that Paris had of most illustrious in letters, sciences, and arts. D'Alembert was no more than an ordinary visitor, *unus inter pares*. But his talent as a talker made the place more delightful.

"His conversation," says Grimm, "offered all that could instruct and divert the mind. He lent himself with as much facility as good-will to whatever subject would please most generally; bringing to it an almost inexhaustible fund of ideas, anecdotes, and curious recollections. There was, I may say, no topic, however dry or frivolous in itself, that he had not the secret of making interesting. He spoke well, related with much precision, and brought out his point with a rapidity which was peculiar to him. All his humorous sayings have a delicate and profound originality."

Variety — such was the special character of the salon of Mlle. de Lespinasse; and this is particularly shown in the account that Grimm has left of it.

"Without fortune, without birth, without beauty, she had succeeded in collecting around her a very numerous, very

varied, and very assiduous society. Her circle met daily from five o'clock until nine in the evening. There we were sure to find choice men of all orders in the State, the Church, the Court,— military men, foreigners, and the most distinguished men of letters. Every one agrees that though the name of M. d'Alembert may have drawn them thither, it was she alone who kept them there. Devoted wholly to the care of preserving that society, of which she was the soul and the charm, she subordinated to this purpose all her tastes and all her personal intimacies. She seldom went to the theatre or into the country, and when she did make an exception to this rule it was an event of which all Paris was notified in advance. . . . Politics, religion, philosophy, anecdotes, news, nothing was excluded from the conversation, and, thanks to her care, the most trivial little narrative gained, as naturally as possible, the place and notice it deserved. News of all kinds was gathered there in its first freshness."

No one has better pictured than Marmontel the influence of Mlle. de Lespinasse on her society, or made us feel more fully the sort of creative breath which, from this chaos, brought forth a world so brilliant and harmonious.

"I do not put," he says, "among the number of my private societies the assembly which gathered every evening in the apartments of Mlle. de Lespinasse, for with the exception of a few friends of d'Alembert, such as the Chevalier de Chastellux, the Abbe Morellet, Saint-Lambert, and myself, the circle was formed of persons who were not bound together. She had taken them here and there in society, but so well assorted were they that once there they fell into harmony like the strings of an instrument touched by an able hand. Following out that comparison, I may say that she played the instrument with an art that came of genius; she seemed

to know what tone each string would yield before she touched it; I mean to say that our minds and our natures were so well known to her that in order to bring them into play she had but to say a word. Nowhere was conversation more lively, more brilliant, or better regulated than at her house. It was a rare phenomenon indeed, the degree of tempered, equable heat which she knew so well how to maintain, sometimes by moderating it, sometimes by quickening it. The continual activity of her soul was communicated to our souls, but measurably; her imagination was the mainspring, her reason the regulator. Remark that the brains she stirred at will were neither feeble nor frivolous: the Condillacs and Turgots were among them; d'Alembert was like a simple, docile child beside her. Her talent for casting out a thought and giving it for discussion to men of that class, her own talent in discussing it with precision, sometimes with eloquence, her talent for bringing forward new ideas and varying the topic — always with the facility and ease of a fairy, who, with one touch of her wand, can change the scene of her enchantment — these talents, I say, were not those of an ordinary woman. It was not with the follies of fashion and vanity that daily, during four hours of conversation, without languor and without vacuum, she knew how to make herself interesting to a wide circle of strong minds."

Grimm insists on very nearly the same traits. "She possessed," he says, "in an eminent degree that art so difficult and so precious,— of making the best of the minds of others, of interesting them, and of bringing them into play without any appearance of constraint or effort. She knew how to unite the different styles of mind, sometimes even the most opposed, without appearing to take the slightest pains to do so; by a word, adroitly flung in, she sustained the conversation, animating and varying it as she pleased.

No one knew better how to do the honours of her house; she put every one in his place, and every one was content with it. She had great knowledge of the world, and that species of politeness which is most agreeable; I mean that which has the tone of personal interest."

There were times, however, when the sensitive taste of Mlle. de Lespinasse was shocked and overcome by occasional vulgarity of manners or expression. Of this the Abbé Morellet has left an amusing record in his "Memoirs."

"Mlle. de Lespinasse," he relates, "loving men of intellect passionately and neglecting no means of knowing them and attracting them to her circle, ardently desired to know M. de Buffon. Mme. Geoffrin, agreeing to procure her that happiness, invited Buffon to pass an evening at her house. Behold Mlle. de Lespinasse in the seventh heaven, promising herself to observe closely that celebrated man, and not lose a single word that issued from his lips. The conversation having begun, on the part of Mlle. de Lespinasse by flattering compliments, such as she knew so well how to pay, the topic of the art of writing was brought up, and some one remarked, with eulogy, how well M. de Buffon had united clearness with loftiness of style, a union very difficult and rarely produced. 'Oh, the devil!' said M. de Buffon, his head high, his eyes partly closed, and with an air half silly, half inspired: 'oh, the devil! when it comes to clarifying one's style, that 's another pair of sleeves.' At this speech, this vulgar comparison, Mlle. de Lespinasse was visibly troubled; her countenance changed, she threw herself back in her chair, muttering between her teeth, 'Another pair of sleeves! clarify his style!' and she did not recover herself the whole evening."

But conversation alone was not all that went on in the salon of the rue de Belle-Chasse; academicians were made

there. Chastellux owed his election in a great measure to Mlle. de Lespinasse. In her last hours, already lying on her deathbed, she secured that of La Harpe. "M. de La Harpe" says Bachaumont in his Memoirs, "was one of her nurslings; by her influence she opened the doors of the Academy to him who is now its secretary. This poet was the last of those whom she enabled to enter them." All power has its detractors, all royalty its envious carpers, and these cast great blame on Mlle. de Lespinasse for caballing, so they said, in the interests of her friends and through the influence of d'Alembert, to close the doors of the Academy to those who were not her friends. Dorat, whose style she did not like (and perhaps not his person), attributed to her the various checks his academic ambition had met with; and he made himself the organ of these accusations in two comedies entitled, "Les Prôneurs" and "Merlin Bel Esprit." Society came very near seeing renewed the scandal of the famous comedy of "Les Philosophes," and Mlle. de Lespinasse only just escaped being acted on the stage during her lifetime by Dorat, as Rousseau had been by Palissot. Without justifying Dorat, whose comic muse was otherwise very inoffensive, it cannot be denied that Mlle. de Lespinasse played a very great part in all the Academic struggles, and that her devotion to the ideas of d'Alembert and the Encyclopedists, often carried her too far. Grimm, who mentions the reproach, contests its justice without denying its cause.

"Her enemies," he says, "blamed her, very ridiculously, for being concerned in a variety of affairs which were not her business, and for having favoured by her intrigues that philosophic despotism which the cabal of the bigots accused M. d'Alembert of exercising over the Academy. But why should women, who decide everything in France, not decide

also the honours of literature? . . . M. Dorat, who thinks he has reason to complain of her, has allowed himself to take vengeance in a play called 'Les Prôneurs.' Several persons who have heard it read think it has more invention and more gaiety than M. Dorat has put into his other comedies. The play turns on a young man whom they want to initiate into the mysteries of the modern philosophy, and to whom, in consequence, they teach the methods of acquiring celebrity in the quickest manner. M. d'Alembert and Mlle. de Lespinasse play the chief rôles. The story is told that one of their most zealous admirers, an old courtier who is very hard of hearing, when the plot of the new play was read before him, seeing every one about him ecstatic, cried out, louder than any of them, 'There now! that is good comedy.'"

We now know the friends who occupied the mind of Mlle. de Lespinasse; we have next to speak of those who filled her heart. . . .

But here we must turn to the sketch of M. de Mora and M. de Guibert, and to the picture of the love, the passion, the remorse that consumed her life contained in Sainte-Beuve's essay which precedes these Notes. All further analysis would be superfluous, for what can be needed after the sympathetic but judicial insight of that true discerner of men and women?

Nevertheless, for a clear understanding of the following letters, which are full of allusions that need a clue, it is well to refer once more to the particular fact that underlies them, namely: the struggle in her soul between her love for M. de Mora and her passion for M. de Guibert. All the letters up to the time of M. de Mora's death have this struggle for their key-note, — a struggle naturally full of inconsistencies. After his death her remorse begins, and, embittered by M. de

Guibert's unfaithfulness — which her passion condones — it kills her.

Mlle. de Lespinasse possessed the mysterious gift of *charm*, a gift that cannot be explained or analyzed, a spiritual gift, not dependent on beauty or physical attraction, and one which many women exercise equally over men and women. The word "exercise," however, is not applicable to it, for it is an unconscious faculty, a gift bestowed on women which they themselves are unable to explain; some of its elements are easily defined, — such as self-unconsciousness, perception of the souls of others, — but as a whole the gift is mysterious. Mlle. de Lespinasse had it in an eminent degree until the period of her fatal passion. Plainly it was a part of the tie between herself and M. de Mora, and she never lost it with her circle of friends so long as she lived, nor after her death. The story of d'Alembert's attachment to her is as full of pain as her own, and even more pathetic. His was the passion of friendship, if not of love; and it is difficult to acquit her of indifference to his feelings, and even of cruelty, especially in the bequest of her correspondence with M. de Mora, to be read and destroyed by him at her death. Even Marmontel, so faithful to her himself, says: "Mlle. de Lespinasse was no longer the same with d'Alembert; not only did he have to bear her coldness, but often her fretful humours full of gloom and bitterness." She admits this herself, and gives as its excuse (which Sainte-Beuve recognizes) that her soul was wrung with remorse for the deception she was practising upon him. A true excuse no doubt, and one with which we ought to credit her; but the sorrow and the distress to him were none the less, and the shock when he discovered the truth after her death was not the more bearable. No, his passion stands beside hers in this sad story, and we cannot help comparing them. Hers has the *stürm und drang* of

passionate emotion, with fame to crown it: his was silent sorrow, and he died of it, unsung.

Marmontel leaves us no doubt that her death was the cause of his. "D'Alembert," he says, "was unconsoled and inconsolable for his loss. It was then that he buried himself in the lodging given to him in the Louvre as secretary of the French Academy. I have told elsewhere how he passed the rest of his life. He often complained to me of the dreadful solitude into which he had fallen. In vain I reminded him of all that he had told me himself about the change in the feelings of his friend. "Yes," he replied, "she was changed, but I was not; she lived no longer for me, but I lived always for her. Now that she is gone, I know not why I live. Ah! would that I had still to suffer the bitter moments she knew so well how to soften and make me forget! Do you remember the happy evenings we spent with her? And now — what remains to me? Instead of herself when I come home, I find her shade. This lodging in the Louvre is like a tomb; I never enter it except with horror."

D'Alembert survived his friend, whose memory never left him for an instant, seven years.

It was on a Thursday, May 23, 1776, that death brought to Mlle. de Lespinasse the rest for which she longed. The account that La Harpe has left of this event is perhaps the most affecting that we have of it: "During the last days of her life she saw none but her intimate friends. They were all in her chamber on the night of her death; and all were weeping. She had passed the last three days in a state of exhaustion that scarcely permitted her to speak aloud. The nurses revived her with cordials and raised her in her bed. 'Do I still live?' she said. Those were her last words."

The Letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse cannot be read and judged by personal standards or social convention; not even

from the standpoint of our present phase of human nature, which a century has changed from hers. There are many judgments and countless criticisms that might be made upon her; but the essential thing is that here is a human soul laid bare in the fierce light of the fire of passion, and fit to stand by the great ones of her class, Sappho, Héloïse, and the unknown souls whose genius never passed to words; for this passion of loving is a form of genius.

LETTERS

OF

MLLE. DE LESPINASSE TO M. DE GUIBERT.

PARIS, Saturday evening, May 15, 1773.

YOU start on Tuesday; and as I know not the effect which your departure will have upon me, as I know not if I shall have freedom or will to write, I wish to speak with you once more and assure myself of receiving news of you from Strasburg. You must tell me if you arrive there in good health; if the movement of travelling has not already calmed your soul. Not that your soul is ill, it suffers only from the ills it causes; and diversion, change of scene will suffice to turn aside those emotions of sympathy which may be painful to you because you are kind and honourable. Yes, you are very kind; I have just re-read your letter of this morning; it has the sweetness of Gestner joined to the energy of Jean-Jacques. Eh, *mon Dieu!* why unite all that can touch and please, and why, above all, offer me a blessing of which I am not worthy, which I have not deserved?

No, no! I do not want your friendship; it would console me, it would agitate me, and I need rest; I need to forget you for a time. I wish to be sincere with you and with myself; and, in truth, in the trouble in which I am I fear to be mistaken; perhaps my remorse is greater than my wrong-

doing; perhaps the alarm I have felt is that which would most offend the one I love. I have just received, this instant, a letter so full of confidence in my feelings; he speaks to me of myself, of what I think, of my soul, with that degree of knowledge and certainty which is uttered only when we feel strongly and keenly. Ah, *mon Dieu!* by what charm, by what fatality have you come to distract me? Why did I not die in the month of September? I could have died then without regret, without the reproaches that I now make to myself. Alas! I feel it, I could still die for him; there is no interest of mine I would not sacrifice to him — but for two months past I have had none to make; I do not love more, but I love better. Oh! he will pardon me! I had suffered so much! my body, my soul were so exhausted by the long continuance of the sorrow. The news I received of him threw me sometimes into frenzy. It was then that I first saw you; then that you revived my soul, then that you brought pleasure into it; I know not which was sweetest, to feel it, or to owe it to you.

But tell me, is this the tone of friendship, the tone of confidence? What is it that is drawing me? Make me know myself; aid me to recover myself in a measure; my soul is convulsed; is it you, is it your departure, what is it that persecutes me? I can no more. At this moment I have confidence in you, even to abandonment, but perhaps I shall never speak to you again of my life. Adieu, I shall see you to-morrow; possibly I shall feel embarrassed by what I have now written to you. Would to heaven that you were my friend, or that I had never known you! Do you believe me? Will you be my friend? Think of it, once only; is that too much?

Sunday, May 23, 1773.

If I were young, pretty, and very charming, I should not fail to see much art in your conduct to me; but as I am nothing of all that, I find a kindness and an honour in it which have won you rights over my soul forever. You have filled it with gratitude, with *esteem*, with sensibility, and all other feelings which give intimacy and confidence to intercourse. I cannot speak as well as Montaigne upon friendship, but, believe me, we shall feel it better. And yet, if what Montaigne says had been in his heart, would he have consented to live after the loss of such a friend?

But this is not the question here; it is of you, of the grace, the delicacy, the timeliness of your quotation. You come to my rescue; you will not let me blame myself; you will not suffer your memory to be a sad reproach to my heart, and, perhaps, an offence to my self-respect; in a word, you wish me to enjoy in peace the friendship that you offer me and prove to me with as much gentleness as grace. Yes, I accept it; I make it my blessing; it will console me; and if I ever again enjoy your society it will be the pleasure I shall feel and desire the most.

I hope you have pardoned me the wrong I did not do. You surely feel that it is not possible for me to suspect you of an impulse against kindness and honour. Yet I accused you of it; that meant nothing, except that I was weak and culpable, and, above all, troubled to the point of losing my presence and freedom of mind. You see things too well and too quickly to let me fear you could mistake me; I am well assured that your soul sees no reason to complain of the emotions of mine.

I know that you did not start till Thursday at half-past five o'clock. I was at your door, two minutes after your departure. I had sent in the morning to inquire at what hour you left on

Wednesday ; and, to my great astonishment, I learned that you were still in Paris, and it was not known if you would start on Thursday even. I went myself to learn if you were ill ; and (what may strike you as shocking) it seemed to me that I desired it. Nevertheless, with an inconsistency which I will not explain I felt comforted on learning that you were gone. Yes, your departure has restored my calmness ; but I feel more sad. You must pardon this, and be satisfied. I do not know if I regret you, but I miss you as my pleasure ; I believe that active and sensitive souls cling too strongly to pleasure. It is not the idea of the length of your absence that distresses me — my thought does not go so far ; it is simply the present that weighs upon my soul, depresses, saddens it, and scarcely leaves it energy to desire better sentiments.

But see, what horrible selfishnes ! here are three pages full of myself, and yet I believe it is of you that I am thinking ; at least I feel I must know how you are, whether you are well. When you read this, how far away you will be ! Your person may be only three hundred leagues distant, but see what strides your thought has already made ! what new objects ! what ideas ! what novel reflections ! It seems to me that I am speaking now to the mere shadow of you ; all that I know of you has disappeared ; scarcely will you find in your memory any traces of the affections which agitated and excited you during the last days you spent in Paris ; and it is best so. You know how we agreed that too great sensibility was a mark of mediocrity, and your character commands you to be great ; your talents condemn you to celebrity. Yield yourself, therefore, to your destiny, and tell yourself, firmly, that you are not made for the soft, inward life that tenderness and sentiment require. There is only pleasure and no glory in living for a single object. When we reign in one heart

only we cannot reign in public opinion. There are names made for history; yours will one day rouse its admiration. When I fill myself with that thought the interest with which you inspire me is a little moderated. Adieu.

Monday, May 24, 1773.

What say you to this folly? Scarcely can I flatter myself that you will read me when I overwhelm you with letters! But you said the other day that we should write at length to friends, to those who please us, to those we would like to talk with. If you spoke truly, you are obliged not only to read me with interest, but with indulgence.

I have just re-read my long letter; *mon Dieu*, how tiresome I found it! but if I write it over again it will be no better. I feel myself predestined to be tiresome in more ways than one. I am sad and dull; what can one do with that? But I have questions to put to you; answer them, and you will be very amiable. Have you received a letter from Diderot? He expects to leave the 6th of June; thus you will see him in Russia. Why did you not start on Wednesday? Was it to yourself or to some one else that you gave those twenty-four hours? Have you carried away with you that book of M. Thomas? I hope so; it has almost the tone of your soul; it is noble, strong, and virtuous. There are, no doubt, a few defects; he has corrected what was turgid and exaggerated in his style; but there is too much analysis and enumeration, which fatigue a little — especially when it costs us much to separate from an object which fills our thoughts. I have been obliged to stop reading it for several days.[1] It is the postman who decides, twice a week, all the actions of my life; yesterday he made reading impossible to me. I sought only

[1] "Essay on the Character, Manners, Morals, and Mind of Women in the different Ages," by Antoine-Léonard Thomas, of the French Academy. Paris, 1772.

the letter I did not receive; why look for it in M. Thomas? I could not find it there! Did you not promise me news from Strasburg? Are you surprised now that you pledged yourself to write to me so often? Have you regretted the facility with which you yielded to the interest and eagerness shown to you? It is troublesome at a distance of three hundred leagues to have to act for others; there is no pleasure except in following one's own impulse and sentiment. See how generous I am! I offer to return your promise if you now find you have made a mistake. Acknowledge it to me, and I assure you I will not be wounded. Believe me, it is only vanity that makes people touchy, and I have none; I am merely a good creature, very stupid, very simple, who loves the happiness and pleasure of those I love better than what is mine or for me. Having that knowledge, be at your ease; write to me "un peu, beaucoup, pas du tout" — but do not fancy that I shall be equally satisfied: for I have even less indifference than vanity. But I have a strength, or a faculty, which renders me able for all: it is that of knowing how to suffer, and to suffer much without complaint.

Adieu; have you reached this point in my letter? and is it not wearisome?

Sunday, May 30, 1773.

I received, yesterday, your Strasburg letter; the time seemed very long since Wednesday, 19th, the day on which I received your last sign of remembrance; that which came to me yesterday consoled me and did good to my soul, which needs to be diverted by the entrance of a gentle sentiment to which it can yield without trouble and without remorse. Yes, I can now avow it to myself, I can say it to you — I care for you tenderly; your absence gives me keen regrets; but no longer have I to struggle against the feelings you in-

spire in me; I have seen clearly into my soul. Ah! the excess of my sorrow justifies me, I am not guilty, and yet, before long, I shall be a victim. I thought to die Friday on receiving a letter by special courier; the trouble into which it threw me took from me even the power to unseal it; I was more than a quarter of an hour without moving; my soul had numbed my senses. At last I read it, and I found but a part of what I feared. I need not tremble for the life of him I love.

But sheltered from the greatest of all misfortunes, oh, my God! how much remains for me to suffer! how crushed I feel beneath the weight of life! the duration of ills is more than human strength can bear; I feel but one courage, often but one need. Ought I not therefore to love you, ought I not to cherish your presence? You have had the power to divert my mind from an anguish as sharp as it was deep; I await, I desire your letters. Yes, believe me, none but the unhappy are worthy of friends; if your soul had never suffered never could you have entered mine. I should admire, I should praise your talents, but I should keep aloof, because I have a sort of repugnance to that which fills my mind only: we must be calm to think; when excited, agitated, we can only feel and suffer. You tell me that you are shaken by regrets, by remorse even; that your sensibility is all pain. I believe you, and it grieves me; and yet, I know not why, the impression that I receive from your letter is the contrary of that. There seems to me a calmness, a repose and force in all your expressions; you appear to speak of what you have felt, not of what you are feeling; in short, if I had rights, if I were sensitive, if friendship were not such a facile thing, I should tell you that Strasburg is far, very far from the rue Tarenne.

Président Montesquieu asserts that climate has a great in-

fluence on the moral condition; is Strasburg more northerly than Paris? Think how much I shall have to fear Petersburg! — No, I will not fear; I believe in you; I believe in your friendship. Explain to me why I have this confidence, but be careful not to think that vanity counts for anything. My feeling for you is purged of that vile alloy which corrupts and enfeebles all affections.

You would have been very amiable had you told me whether my letter was the only one you found in Strasburg. See how generous I am. I could be willing that it were changed for the one you wished to find there. Let us decide *our ranks*, give me my place; but as I do not like to change, let it be a good one. I do not want that of the unhappy person who is displeased with you, nor that of her with whom you are displeased. I know not where you can place me; but do so if possible, that we may both be content; do not bargain, give me much, you will see that I shall not abuse it. Oh! you shall see how well I know how to love! I can only love; I know only how to love! With moderate faculties, we can yet do much when we centre them on a single object. Well! I have but one thought, and that thought fills my soul and all my life.

You think that dissipation and new scenes and knowledge will distract you but little from your friends. Know yourself better; yield in good faith and with good grace to the power which your nature has over your will, over your sentiments, over all your actions. Persons who are governed by the need to love do not go to Petersburg. They may go very far, but if so, they are condemned to it, and they do not say that they "re-enter their souls" to find there what they love; they believe they have never quitted it, be they a thousand leagues away. But there is more than one manner of being good and excellent; yours will carry you far

along in the path of advancement in every acceptation of those words.

I should pity a sensitive woman to whom you would be the first object; her life would be consumed by fears and regrets; but I should congratulate a vain woman, a proud woman; she would pass her life in applauding you, in adorning herself to your taste. Such women love glory, they love the opinion of the world, and lustre. All that is very fine, very noble, but very cold, and very far from the passion which says: —

"Death and Hell appear before me;
Ramire! joyfully I go there for thee."

But I am distracted — worse than that, I am singular; I have but one tone, one colour, one manner; and when they please no longer they chill and weary. You must tell me which of the two effects they have produced. But you must also tell me, if you please, the only news that interests me, namely, how you are.

The place of governor of the École Militaire is not yet given.

June 6, 1773.

Ah! how rare is that which gives pleasure, and how slowly it comes! time seems infinite since the 24th, and I know not how much longer I shall have to wait for a letter from Dresden. But, at least, will you promise to be inclined to write to me as often as you can? Let me have, opposed to my pleasure, against my interests, only that which does not depend on you: I mean distance and the delay of couriers. But I fret lest your curiosity, your activity, in a word, your merits and your virtues should be against me. That love of glory, for instance, will make your love, or rather my own, one sorrow the more in my life. Yet you can say to me, as the hermit said to Zadig, "I have some-

times poured comfort into the souls of the sorrowful." Yes, I owe to you that which makes the charm and the sweetness of friendship; I feel that the tie is already too strong, that it takes too great an ascendancy over my soul; when my soul suffers it is tempted to turn to you for consolation; if it were calm and unoccupied it might be drawn to you by an impulse more active, by a desire for pleasure, even.

Am I so much to you? Am I not better fitted to love and regret you? At best, my sentiments can only be agreeable to you; but to me, before I examined your character, you were already necessary to me. But what think you of a soul that gives itself before knowing whether it will be accepted, before being able to judge whether it will be received with pleasure or with gratitude only? Ah! *mon Dieu!* if you were not gifted with feeling, what grief you would cause me! For it does not suffice me that you are honourable: I have virtuous friends, I have *better still;* and yet I care only for what you are to me — but truly, sincerely, is there no madness, perhaps even absurdity, in believing you my friend? Answer me; not coldly, but with truth.

Though your soul is agitated, it is not ill like mine, which passes ceaselessly from convulsion to depression. I can judge of nothing; I mislead myself continually; I take poison to calm me. You see I cannot guide myself; enlighten me, strengthen me. I will believe you; you shall be my support; you shall succour me like reflection itself, which is no longer at my service. I know not how to foresee. I can distinguish nothing. Conceive my trouble. I can rest only on the idea of death; there are days when death is my only hope; but also I have other instincts, and very contrary ones; sometimes I feel myself manacled to life; the thought of grieving him I love takes from me all desire to be comforted, if it be at the cost of his peace of mind.

In short, what can I say to you? The excess of my inconsistency bewilders my mind, the weight of life is crushing my soul. What must I do? What will become of me? Will it be Charenton or the grave which will deliver me from myself? I make you a victim if you care enough for me to take part in what I suffer, and I regret it; but if I have caused you only ennui, I shall sink with confusion. Do not think you can hide this from me, whatever effort you may make to do so; you cannot deceive my interest — But gratify it by telling me how you are; have you had as much pleasure as you hoped, or less? Is your health better than during the last days you were here? You are very modest, you never told me how you were celebrated at Strasburg; verses were made in your honour; they were very bad, it is true, but the intention was so good! Do not be angry.

Tell me, have you read "Le Connétable" on your journey [tragedy in rhyme by M. de Guibert], not while posting, but aloud in good society? Apropos of the "Connétable," if you had a certain sensibility, if you were like Montaigne and regarded me like another La Béotie, how I should pity you for denying yourself the pleasure of giving me a mark of confidence, esteem, and affection! I do not boast of myself, but I assure you I should be torn by remorse if I had treated you in that way. What does that prove? — tell me. Adieu; I know all the *difference* in our affections; teach me the *resemblance;* that game [then in vogue] will never have been played with so much interest.

Sunday, June 20, 1773.

Oh! *mon Dieu!* are you dead, or have you already forgotten how keen and sorrowful is the remembrance of you in the souls you have left? Not a word from you since May 24th! It is very difficult not to believe it is a little

your fault. If that is so, you deserve neither the regret my heart feels, nor the reproaches that it makes you. I knew that M. d'Aguesseau had received no news of you. I interest myself in you in a manner so true, so sincere, that I should have been delighted to have heard that you had given him the preference over me. He deserves it, doubtless in all respects; but it is not justice that rules feeling. Do you believe that if that virtue governed me I should be uneasy at your silence, and need so many proofs of your friendship? Alas, no! I cannot even explain to myself why I am so concerned about you at this moment, for I heard yesterday some news which engulfs my soul in sorrow; I have passed the night in tears; but when my head and all my faculties were exhausted, when I gained one moment which was not a pain, I thought of you, and it seemed to me that had you been here I should have written you what I suffered and perhaps you would have come to me. Tell me if I deceive myself. When my soul suffers am I wrong to seek consolation in yours?

In the midst of travel and many interests so different from those that touch and affect the heart, can you still hear a language which is foreign to most men carried away by dissipation or intoxicated by vanity? Nor is that language better known to those who, like you, are filled with the desire for knowledge and a love of fame. You are so convinced that sensibility is a sign of mediocrity that I faint with fear lest your soul should close itself wholly to this emotion. It is fifteen days since I wrote to you, and I believed yesterday that I would not write to you again until I heard from you. Suffering has softened my soul and I yield to it. At five o'clock this morning I took two grains of opium; I obtained a calmness better than sleep; my pain is less rending; I feel myself crushed, with less force to resist. The

violence of the soul is moderated; I can speak to you, I can moan, but yesterday I had no power of expression. I could not have told you that I fear for the life of him I love; I could have died sooner than pronounce those words that froze my heart.

You have loved; conceive, therefore, what such terrors are. Until Wednesday next I am left in an uncertainty that horrifies me, but commands me, nevertheless, to live. Yes, it is not possible to die so long as we are loved — but it is dreadful to live. Death is the most urgent need of my soul, yet I feel myself manacled to life. Pity me; forgive me for abusing the kindness you have shown me. Is it in you or in me that I find the confidence that draws me on?

They say that you cannot have found the King of Prussia in Berlin. Have you gone to Stettin to join him? he was to be there till the 20th. I am so anxious; it seems to me we could have had news of you from Berlin. How wrong of you if you have shown the slightest negligence. You know well that you gave me your word of honour that some one should write to me if you were ill. But do not make use of that pretext which may content ordinary friendship *which does not wish to be made uneasy;* that would be detestable; I do not wish to be spared; I wish to suffer through my friends, for my friends; and I treasure a thousand times more the troubles that come to me through them than all the happiness on earth that is not derived from them. Good-bye; the opium is still in my head; it affects my sight; perhaps it makes me more stupid than usual — what matter if it does? it is not my mind, only my sorrows that interest you.

Monday evening, June 21, 1773.

I wrote to you yesterday, and I write to you again to-night. If I waited three days, that is, till Wednesday, per-

haps I should never answer your letter of the 10th, which M. d'Aguesseau brought me to-day. In the first place (for there may still, perhaps, be a future for me), I must ask you to address your letters direct to me; to send them through M. d'Aguesseau is to put one risk the more against me; he may go into the country, or travel, etc.; in short, it is enough that we are three thousand miles apart; add nothing to them. Oh! I shall surely seem mad to you: I am going to speak to you with the frankness, the self-abandonment one would have if death were certain on the morrow; listen to me, therefore, with the indulgence and the interest that we have for the dying.

Your letter has done me good; I expected it still, but I had ceased to desire it, because my soul could no longer have an emotion that resembled pleasure. Well, — shall I say it? — you have given diversion for a few moments to the horror which absorbs my whole existence. Ah! my God! I fear for his life; mine is fastened to his, yet I have need to talk with you.

Can you conceive what it is that impels me, that drags me towards you? Nevertheless, I am not content with your friendship; I find a coldness, a carelessness in not telling me why you did not write to me from Dresden as you promised; and besides, you make me feel in too marked a manner that your regret at not finding in Berlin what you hoped for has destroyed the pleasure you would otherwise have felt at the expression and proof of my friendship; and then too, — shall I say it? — I am wounded that you have not thanked me for the interest that I take in you. Do you think it any answer to this that I am very unjust, very difficult to please? No, I am nothing of all that; I am very true, very ill, and very unhappy — oh, yes, very unhappy.

If I did not tell you what I feel, what I think, I could not

speak to you at all. Do you believe that in the trouble in which I am one has the power to restrain one's self? For example, ought I to be touched by your manner of saying to me, as to the chief interest of my life, "Answer me on all this what you can, and what you like"? Oh! yes, what I like! you leave me great liberty, but you see how I employ it,—not in criticising you, only in proving to you what you know even better than I: that we have the tone and expression of what we feel, and if I am not satisfied, it is not your fault—I know that well.

But I claim nothing, unless it be that species of consolation which we so seldom allow ourselves: that of speaking out our whole thought. People are always restrained by a fear of the morrow; I feel myself as free as though there were no morrow for me; and if, by chance, I should live on, I foresee that I could forgive myself for having told you the truth at the risk of displeasing you. Is it not true that our friendship must be great, strong, and complete, our intimacy tender, solid, close, or else, nothing at all? Therefore, I can never repent having shown you the depths of my soul. If that is not what you want, if there be any contempt for it, well! let us be sincere; let us not be shamed or embarrassed; let us return whence we started, and believe that we have dreamed. We can add this clause to the chapter of *experience*, and behave in future like those well-bred persons who know it is not polite to tell their dreams. We will keep silence about them; silence is pleasant when it comforts self-love!

You will not tell me what *rank* you give me; are you restrained by a fear of giving me too much or too little? that may be just, but it is not noble. Youth is so magnificent, it loves to give lavishly; yet here you are as miserly as if you were old or rich. You ask the impossible; you want me to

pity you because you do your own will; I am to combat you to restore your native spirit. Eh! *mon Dieu!* a little while and I will answer for it that your nature will govern you despotically; the habit of conquering will strengthen it, and there is little need of that! You have said to yourself (I have long been sure of this) that it mattered nothing whether you were happy so long as you were great. Let things happen; I will answer for it that you will be consistent; there is nothing vague or wavering about you except your feelings; your thoughts, your projects are fixed in an absolute manner. I am much deceived if you were not born to make the happiness of a vain soul and the despair of a feeling one. Own to me that what I am now saying does not displease you; you will forgive me for loving you less when I prove to you that others will admire you more.

You ask me a singular question, truly. You say, "Are there better reasons than myself for his absence?" Yes, there are better, — one indeed that is absolute; one that if he succeeds in subduing it, the sacrifice of my whole life cannot repay the debt. All the circumstances, all events, all moral and physical reasons are against him; but he is so ardent for me that he will not permit me to have a doubt of his return. Nevertheless, I shudder at what I may hear on Wednesday: he spits blood; he has been bled twice; at the moment when the courier left him he was better; but the hemorrhage may return; and how can I be calm with that thought before me? He himself fears the result; though he tries to reassure me, I detect his fear. Tell me if you know of whom I speak; and further, did you know it when I wrote to ask you for "Le Connétable"? Is it delicacy or caution which makes you seem to ignore a name I have not mentioned to you?

But I am not speaking to you of your journey. If I could

believe that I shall live and that you will not go to Russia, I should eagerly desire that you might be detained in Berlin. But as I think that you always feel the need of doing difficult things, I would like, now that you are once started, that you should make the tour of the world, — in order that it might once be done; and then, could there be repose in the future? Hardly would you return before you would start for Montauban [where his father lived]; and after that, other projects; for you cannot endure rest unless it be to make plans for travelling a thousand leagues. Yes, on my honour, I think it was a great misfortune for me the day that I spent one year ago at Moulin-Joli.[1] I was far indeed from needing to form a new attachment; my life and my soul were so filled that I was very far from desiring a new interest; and you, you had no need of this additional proof of what you can inspire in an honourable and sensitive person. Oh! it is pitiful! Are we free agents? Can what *is* be otherwise? Were you not free to tell me that you would write to me often? As for me, I am not free to cease to desire it eagerly. Having thus *scolded* you, I must add that you were very kind to write to me on your arrival; I deserved it, — yes, indeed I did.

Thursday, June 24, 1773.

Three times in one week! It is too much, much too much, is it not? But it is because I care for you enough to believe that I have made you uneasy. You must be feeling some impatience to know if I am still living. Well, yes! I am condemned to live; I am no longer at liberty to die; I should do harm to one who desires to live for me. I have news of him to the 10th; it does not altogether reassure

[1] The house of the painter and littérateur, Watelet, on the banks of the Seine, where she met M. de Guibert for the first time. The gardens of this place were famous as among the first to be laid out in the English style. — Fr. Ed.

me, but I hope that his hemorrhage may not have fatal results; I even hope it may hasten his return; but this hot weather is a mortal injury to him, and I must wait.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* always to see pleasure deferred, disappearing! always to be engulfed, overwhelmed by sorrow! If you knew what need I have of repose! for one year I have been upon the rack. You alone, perhaps, have had the power to suspend my sorrow for a few instants; and that blessing of a moment has bound me to you forever.

But tell me, — my last letter, did it displease you? Do I not stand ill with you? I should be grieved were it so; but I am not like Mme. du Châtelet; I know no repentance. Answer me with the same frankness that I employ to you; esteem me enough not to tell me half the truth; tell me all the evil you think of me; and it is not, as M. de la Rochefoucauld says, for the pleasure of hearing myself spoken of that I ask you to tell me this; it is to judge if you are my friend, if — in a word — you *can be* my friend. I attach enough value to our intercourse to wish urgently to know what there may have been of sudden surprise, or mistake, in that which drew us to each other. It is said that nothing is stronger or better founded than the sentiments for which we can give no reason. If that is true, I ought to rely upon your friendship; but you will not have it so; why is that? Shall I not be satisfied with it? Do you not know that the natural impulse after we have acquired a new possession is to examine it, to observe it on all sides; this occupation is perhaps the highest joy that possession gives; but you, you do not know all the details and all the pleasures of sensibility. Whatever is elevated, whatever is noble, whatever is grand, that is your sphere. The heroes of Corneille fix your attention; scarcely do you cast your eyes on the little swains of Gessner. You love to admire, and I, I have but one need,

one will, — to love. What does it matter? We may not have the same language, but there is a sort of instinct that supplies all; nothing, however, can fill the chasm of a thousand leagues of distance!

I was so troubled the last time I wrote that I did not tell you Diderot was in Holland; he likes it so well, he has already so many friends whom he never saw before, that it is quite possible that he may not return to Paris, and even forget that he was on his way to Russia. He is an extraordinary man, not in his place in society: he ought to be the leader of a sect, a Greek philosopher, teaching, instructing youth. He pleases me very much, but nothing about him reaches my soul; his sensibilities are only skin-deep; he never goes farther than emotion. I like nothing that is half and half, nothing that is undecided and not thorough. I cannot understand the ways of people in society; they amuse themselves and yawn, they have friends and they love no one. All that seems to me deplorable. Yes, I prefer the torture that consumes my life to the pleasure that numbs theirs; with that fashion of being we may not be lovable, but we love, and that is a thousand times better than pleasing.

How I should like to know if you are going to Russia. I hope not, because, as you say, I desire it. Letters seem to me to come more slowly from Russia than from any other part of the world. I have re-read, twice, thrice, your letter; first because it was difficult to read, next, because I was difficult to please. Ah! if you knew what faults of omission I found in it! But why should you not make them?

M. d'Alembert is awaiting a letter from you with great impatience. M. de Crillon forestalled you. Your friend, M. d'Aguesseau seemed to me, at least on the day he brought me your letter, very extraordinary; he had the air of a person in

trouble; his movements had something convulsive about them. He said he was ill, and I believe it; he has a project of going to Spa. I do not know if he will, but I am glad he will not be with you. Adieu; I have overwhelmed you with questions to which you do not reply. I do not ask if you would like me to send you the news, because it would be out of my power to put my mind to such things; but I know something that the public does not yet know, namely: that M. d'Aranda is appointed ambassador from Spain in place of M. de Fuentès [father of the Marquis de Mora] and that the latter is given the first place at his Court. All this is of no interest to you, and it may astonish you that it is of great interest to me. Must I not be foolish to interest myself in things that happen in Madrid? Adieu again. My style of folly is equal to your piety. Send me news of yourself often and at length; share, if you can, the pleasure that it will give me. How many letters do you receive that you are more eager to open than mine? — three? ten?

Thursday, July 1, 1773.

Oh! if you knew how unjust I am! how I have accused you! how I have told myself that I ought to expect and desire nothing of your friendship! And the cause of it all was merely that I received no letters from you. Tell me why we expect, why we exact so much from one on whom we do not rely. Ah! truly, I believe you will forgive my inconsistencies; but I, I must not be so indulgent; they hurt me more than they do you. I no longer know what I owe to you; I no longer know what I give you; I only know that your absence is heavy upon me; yet I cannot assure myself that your presence would do me good. Ah! *mon Dieu!* what a horrible situation is that in which pleasure, consolation, friendship, *all*, in short, becomes poison! What must I do?

tell me; how recover calmness? I know not where to look for strength to resist impressions so deep and so diverse. Oh! how many times we die before death! All things distress and injure me; yet the liberty to deliver myself from the burden that is crushing me is taken from me. Laden with sorrow, there is one who wishes me to live; I am torn both ways — by despair, and by the pity that another makes me feel.

Ah! my God! can it be that to love, to be loved, is not a good? I suffer every pain, and, more than that, I trouble the repose, I make the unhappiness, of the one I love. My soul is exhausted by sorrow; my bodily frame is destroyed, and yet I live, and I *must* live. Why do you require it? what matters my life to you? of what value do you reckon it? what am I to you? Your soul is so busy, your life so full and so active, how can you find time to pity my woes? and have you indeed enough feeling to respond to my friendship? Ah! you are very amiable; you have the tone of interest, but it seems to me it is not I who inspire it. My letters are necessary to you; perhaps that is true — yes, as you say so; but why be so long in writing to me? and why not send your letters direct? Strasburg delays them for two or three days.

I am enchanted (and it was thus I intended to begin my letter) that you have been satisfied with the King of Prussia. What you tell me of that magic vapour that surrounds him is so charming, so noble, so just, that I cannot be silent about it; I have read it to all those who deserved to hear it. Mme. Geoffrin asked me to give her a copy. I have sent it far and near, and it will be felt. So you are not going to Russia? I am glad. Let me tell you again how charming I find your friendship; you answer me, you converse, you are still beside me though a thousand leagues distant. But how comes it that that woman does not love you to madness, as you wish

to be loved, as you deserve to be? how else can she employ her soul and her life? Ah! she has neither taste nor sensibility; of that I am sure. She ought to love you, if only from vanity — but why do I meddle in all this? You are satisfied, or if you are not, you love the ill she does you; why, therefore, should I pity you? But that other unhappy *person!* it is she who interests me; have you written to her? is her pain as deep as ever? I must tell you that the other day at Mme. de Boufflers much was said of you and "Le Connétable," and the young Comtesse de Boufflers told me that she believed you were very much in love, and this belief had made her watch Mme. de . . . with great attention. A man present assured us that you no longer loved her; you had done so, but the feeling had worn out, and he thought you would never be long happy or unhappy for the same woman; he said the activity of your soul did not allow it to fix itself long on one object; and from that arose a witty discussion on matters of feeling and passion. The Comtesse de Boufflers finally said that she did not know who it was with whom you were in love, but it certainly was no longer Mme. de . . . and she judged, by the notes she had received from you at the time of your departure, that you were strongly attached to some one and that your absence from her rent your soul; but then came the natural reflection: "Why does he go to Russia?" Perhaps to cure himself, perhaps to stifle the feelings of the woman he loves. At last, after many conjectures of no interest, I was asked if I liked you, if I knew you well, for until then I had not said a word: "Yes, I like him much; after knowing him a little there is only one way of liking him." "Well, then, you know his intimacies; who is the object of his passion?" "No, truly, I know nothing; except that he is now in Berlin and is well; that the King of Prussia has received him admirably and is to show him his

The Comtesse de Boufflers.

troops; after that, he goes to Silesia; that is all I know, and all that interests me." After this we talked of the Opera, of Madame la Dauphine and of a thousand "interesting" things. I tell you all this to show you that I do not like society to gossip about your affections, your dislikes, your inconstancies. I like to hear only of your merit, your virtue, your talents; am I wrong?

I have written three times to Berlin since the 6th of June. No doubt they will forward your letters; I remember the desire you will have to receive certain letters, "the deprivation of which turned your head." For pity's sake do not treat me so well; do not write to me first, because then (without being aware of it) you will write to me merely for the sake of saying you have written. Do not come to me until you have nothing more to say to *her;* that is in the order of things; friendship comes *after*, sometimes at a great distance, sometimes very near — too near perhaps — the unhappy love! We love so much that which comforts us! it is so sweet to love that which gives us pleasure. I do not know why it is, but something warns me that I shall say of your friendship what Comte d'Argenson said on seeing, for the first time, his pretty niece, Mlle. de Berville. "Ah!" he cried, "she is very pretty! let us hope she will give us many griefs."

What do you think of that? But you are so strong, so moderate, and above all so occupied, that you are equally sheltered from great sorrows and little griefs. That is how minds should be, how talents should be; it is that which renders human beings superior to events. And when, with that, a man is as honourable and, above all, as feeling as you are, he is no doubt painfully affected, — enough so to satisfy ordinary friendship; but he is soon diverted from the emotions of his soul when his head is eagerly and deeply

occupied. I predict this of you, and I am glad of it: you will never experience those sorrows which convulse the soul; you are young enough to still receive a few slight shocks, but, I answer for it; you will soon recover your balance; ah, yes! I answer for it, and you will make a great career and have a great celebrity — I shall horrify you, I shall show you a very paltry and common soul, but I cannot bear that idea. Every time that I think of you in the future I have an icy feeling; it is not because what is great attracts admiration and crushes me, but because that which is great so rarely deserves to be loved.

Admit that I am almost as silly as I am wild; I am much worse than either. I have that particular style which Voltaire (I venture to name him) says is the only bad style; I fathom you so well that I know I need not tell you it is the *wearying* style. The difference in our affections is this: you are at the other end of the world, you are calm enough to enjoy everything; while I am in Paris, I suffer, and I enjoy nothing; "that is all," as Marivaux says.

I have received many details regarding *him*. I see there is nothing now to fear from this last hemorrhage; but ask yourself if it is possible to have a moment's peace while trembling for the life of one to whom one would sacrifice one's own life at every instant. Ah! if you did but know how lovable he is, how worthy of being loved! His soul is gentle, tender, strong; I am certain he is the man in all the world who would please and suit you most. . . .

It is you who give me faults; you have that exclusive privilege. I am with all my other friends the best and easiest of beings; they always favour me, they forestall me in every way; I spend my life in thanking them and praising them, and I complain of you — but only to you.

I criticise you, I disapprove of you; why that difference? Can you believe that it is only one year since we first knew each other? It seems to me impossible.

Wednesday evening, July 14, 1773.

Ah! how amiable you can be, and how you surprise me by returning to me, being so occupied, so dissipated as you are! How is it that you even think of one who can have no other merit in your eyes than that of seeming capable of loving and suffering? Of what use to you are those sad faculties? You have no need of being loved, and you would be sorry to make me suffer; what value can you place upon an intimacy where all the advantage is on my side only?

You ask me questions which I am not in a state to answer. Alas! one must needs be calm to answer the questions of indifference. Sorrow, the duration of suffering, have given me a species of stupidity which deprives me of the power of thinking; all the reason left to me is enough (and no more) to judge myself, to condemn my emotions, and be sorry for all my feelings. My soul has continual fever with paroxysms which lead me often to delirium. Oh! if it were true that excess of ill gives birth to good, I might hope for some relief. No, I can no longer bear the diverse agitations that rend my heart, but I reproach myself for the weakness that drags me into showing you what I suffer. It seems to me that I cannot excite your interest; I have no claim on your sensibilities; and if I had, it is not with my sorrows that I ought to nourish them. No, you owe me nothing, and I will prove it to you: I detest, I abhor, the fatality which forced me to write to you *that first note;* yet at this very moment, perhaps, it is dragging me onward with the same power. I did not wish to speak to you of myself; I meant simply to thank you

for writing to me before you reached Vienna. I meant to answer you, not speak to you from myself.

Of your praises I accept none, and I shall amaze you; the reason is that they do not praise me. What matters it to me that you judge I am not silly? It is strange, but nevertheless true, that you are the man in the world whom I least care to please. Explain to me that singularity; explain to me why I judge you with intolerable severity; why I find myself continually unjust to you; why, not believing in your friendship, I cavil at all its expressions; why, in short, having reason to praise you, I am so tempted to find fault? My reason tells me I ought to ask your pardon because my thoughts insult you constantly, and my soul revolts at the mere feeling that you may be showing mercy to me. No, no! I do not want it; judge me severely; see my injustice, my inconsistency, and let yourself follow the impulse that such a sight must inspire in you. Ah! as I have already told you, we cannot make of all this the friendship of Montaigne and La Béotie. They were calm; they simply gave themselves up to the sweet and mutual impressions they received; but we — we are ill, yet with this difference, that you are a sick man full of strength and reason, who will act in a manner to soon enjoy the best of health; while I — I am attacked by a fell disease in which all the reliefs that I have sought have turned to poison, and have served only to render my sufferings more acute. These are strange indeed; they deprave my reason, they lead astray my judgment, for I do not desire to be cured; I am conscious only of the want to die. Ah! my God! how sorry I should be to travel, to devour a hundred volumes in two months of time! how grieved I should be to be worth as much as you, to be destined to such success, such glory! If you only knew how small my soul is! it sees but one thing only in all the world

that is worthy to occupy it. Cæsar, Voltaire, the King of Prussia seem to it sometimes worthy of admiration, but never of envy. I should horrify you too much if I told you the fate I should prefer to all else that breathes; yes, I am like Félix — in Polyeucte: —

> "I enter upon feelings that are not believable,
> Some I have are violent, others are pitiable;
> I have even some — "

But you cannot understand that language; I should make you blush for having thought that my soul had relations with yours. You do me too much honour in raising me to your level; but avoid ever putting me beside the women you most esteem; you would annoy them, and do me harm. You do not know all my value; reflect that I can suffer and die, and then ask yourself if I resemble those women who please and amuse themselves. Alas! the one is as repugnant to me as the other is impossible. I dislike whatever comes to distract and turn me from my one thought; there are objects that nothing can make me lose from sight. What I hear called dissipation, pleasure, only stupefies and wearies me; and if any one had the power to part me a moment from my sorrows, I believe that, far from feeling grateful, I should hate him. What think you of that? you who talk to me of my "happiness," and who lead me to hope that, if it depends on your friendship, you will give it to me. No, monsieur, your friendship will not give me happiness, for that is impossible; it will console me, it may, perhaps, make me suffer, and I do not know whether I shall hereafter felicitate or pity myself most for what I owe to you.

Why do you take the tone of justifying yourself for having read aloud the "Connétable"? It would have been disobliging to refuse a pleasure you could give and receive. The King of Prussia wrote a charming letter to M. d'Alem-

bert, full of your praises, and he counted on hearing you read the "Connétable." I am certain he will be delighted with it; its tragedy is on the tone of his own soul in many ways. Adieu; give me frequent news of you, and form no plan of writing me four lines. Keep that intention for your acquaintance; some friends, even, may be content with it, but I am hard to satisfy. Tell me if you have received my letters.

Paris, July 25, 1773.

No, no! do not deceive yourself; the greatest distances are not those that Nature marks with milestones; the Indies are not so far from Paris as the date of June 27 is far from that of July 15; *there* is veritable remoteness, horrible separation, forgetfulness of the soul! it resembles death, but is worse, because it is felt so long. But do not think I reproach you — ah! *mon Dieu!* I have not the right; you owe me nothing, and I ought to return you thanks for any mark of your remembrance.

I knew from Baron de Kock that the camp manœuvres would not take place. It is thought here that the Emperor and the King of Prussia have given themselves a rendezvous in some town of their new possessions; but you have filled your time in a useful manner, so that you will regret the camps but little. What! sincerely, do you really wish me to reduce you to my dimensions? Is it because you find it easier to bend yourself than to raise me? but from whatever level I look at you, you retain your own height, which is such that few men reach it. Permit me not to regard as a result of confidence and friendship what you tell me of your character. Alas! do you know what you reveal to me by disclosing the inconsistencies which agitate you? It is that I am stupid, that I see nothing, observe nothing; for, if you are neither false nor dissimulating, I ought to have discovered

what you think you now disclose to me of your own accord. Do you wish me to tell you something of profound wisdom? It is that neither you nor I know you perfectly: you, because you are too near, and because you observe yourself too much; and I, because I have always regarded you with fear and embarrassment. Oh! if ever I see you again, I will look better into you; it seems to me that my sight is growing keener.

What you say about the cause of your continental journeys is charming, full of wit and grace, and that is surely enough to make us do without truth. "I fill my youth in order that my old age may not blame me for neglecting to employ it." You see you are like the miser, who, while his children are dying of hunger, justifies his cruelty in his own eyes by saying that he amasses wealth that they may enjoy it after him. Let us be more candid; let us not seek a pretext to justify our tastes and our passions: you go to the ends of the earth because your soul is more eager than tender. Well, what harm in that? You are young, you have known love, you have suffered, and you conclude from that that you have sensibility: it is not so. You are ardent, you can be impassioned, you are capable of all that is strong, of all that is grand, but you will never do any but things of movement; that is to say, actions, detached deeds; and such is not the way of sensibility and tenderness. They attach, they bind, they fill the whole life; they leave no place for aught but sweet and peaceful virtues; they evade distraction; all that separates and removes them from their object seems to them misfortune or tyranny. Consider and compare these things. As I have already told you, nature has not made you to be happy; she has condemned you to be great; submit, therefore, without a murmur.

For the rest, I believe what you tell me about the advan-

tage of this country over that of all others. I do not know if you will bring back from your travels a disgust for travelling, but I am very sure you will have lost the power to settle yourself anywhere. You will have judged with justice and accuracy that which is good, that which is better, but you will do as the Italians do with music; they prefer novelty to excellence. I beg your pardon for contradicting your words, but you must agree that I am truly on the tone of your soul. Do you wish me to talk to you of mine? Here is the state of it. Have you ever watched those who are attacked by slow, incurable diseases? When you inquire of those who are nursing them, the answer is, "As well as can be expected;" which means: "He must die, but he has a few moments of respite." That is precisely the state of health of my soul. To a most violent storm a calm has succeeded. The soul's condition of him I love is such as I could wish it, and according to my heart, but his health is alarming. Nevertheless, I am sure that he makes no mistakes of regimen. He clings to life because it gladdens him to love and to be loved; he lives for that only. Oh! if you knew how winning he is! Yes, you might love me a little, but you would not think well of me for being capable of a faithless feeling to him. Oh! who are you to have turned me for an instant from the most delightful, the most perfect of mankind? Yes, if you knew him — *when* you know him — you will see that in the judgment I pronounce upon him there is neither illusion nor bias.

The Chevalier d'Aguesseau will have written you that I had lost all patience. I sent to him to ask news of you and he had none at the moment, but as soon as he received your letter of the 8th he sent me word that you were well. I was tempted to write and thank you for having a friend to relieve me of anxiety; but then I thought it better to wait till I heard from you.

Yes, I desire to wait for you — always. Why should I go faster than you? I should only weary myself and clog your steps. I desire that no affections shall henceforth agitate me painfully: it is too much. I know not how I have sufficed so far. It is true that I have concentrated my strength on a single point. All nature is dead for me, except certain objects which fill and vivify every moment of my life. I exist for nothing else: things, pleasures, distractions, vanity, social opinion, *all that* is no longer of use to me; I regret the time that I gave to it — though indeed it was very short, for I knew sorrow early, and it has this of good about it; it averts many follies. I was trained by that great teacher of men, *misfortune*. That was the language that pleased you; it touched the feeling spot of your soul, from which dissipation and the amiable social tone of this country is forever removing you. You were glad to have me bring you back to what you once loved, what you once suffered. Yes, there is a species of suffering which has such charm, which brings such sweetness into the soul, that we are ready to prefer that woe to all that is called "pleasure." I taste that joy — or that poison — twice a week; and that sort of nourishment is more needful to me than the air I breathe.

The Comtesse de Boufflers talks to me much of you and of what she writes to you; she likes you because you wrote "Le Connétable," and that is indeed enough on which to found a liking. Oh! how small and narrow my soul is! I hate the Patagonians and the Liliputians equally — but what are my likes and dislikes to you?

You are very amiable to have thought of making your writing larger; but I am inclined to complain of it, for it cuts me off a few lines. In God's name, stay what you are; scribble as you please, travel round the world, but begin in Paris; in a word, do not change a hair from your style of being. I do

not know if it is the best, but it is the most agreeable to me. Is not such praise insipid? Do not laugh at me; I am very silly, but I do assure you I am a good soul — am I not?

Sunday evening, August 1, 1773.

You are too good; you surprise me with kindness. It is delightful to have a pleasure on which we did not count, and I am charmed to owe you an emotion which has done good to my soul. I received yesterday a letter from you dated the 18th; I was much pleased to see that your dates are getting closer; you no longer put fifteen days' interval between them; and I do not owe this change to the regrets I expressed to you, but to you yourself, to your friendship: I like far better that which it gives me than that which I obtain myself. I wanted to thank you, to tell you feebly that which I feel so keenly, and now I am made more happy still, — I have received to-day another letter from you!

My first emotion (I know not why) was fear; the habit of ill-fortune spoils all things. But I was soon reassured. I found you kind, full of feeling, close to my soul. It seemed to me I ought to be glad for having suffered, as my suffering was of interest to you. Oh! with how many regrets you fill my life! I might enjoy your friendship; it might be my consolation, it might be my pleasure, but you are a thousand leagues away! I cannot escape the fear that so many new objects, a life so filled and occupied as that you are forced to lead, may destroy, or at least weaken a tie and an interest to which there is lacking, perhaps, that degree of warmth which makes it a need of the heart, or, at any rate, a habit. I admit that I set but little value on that last tie, which is the sentiment of those who have none; but see the baneful disposition of my soul: I fill myself with fears, regrets, when I ought to enjoy these testimonies and proofs of

your friendship. It is so sweet, so indulgent — that friendship; you forgive me all my injustice; I have blamed you a thousand times, but I have never repented giving myself up to you in the closest confidence. With you it is impossible to feel one's self mistaken, and thus one is sheltered from great evils; for remark that all tragedies are founded on misunderstandings, and that almost all misfortunes have the same cause. But do not punish me for having been unjust by no longer telling me of that which interests you. Tell me all you feel and experience and I promise to share it, and to tell you the impression it makes upon me. I love you too well to impose the least restraint upon myself; I prefer to have to ask your pardon rather than commit no faults. I have no self-love with you; I do not comprehend those rules of conduct that make us so content with self and so cold to those we love. I detest prudence, I even hate (suffer me to say so) those "duties of friendship" which substitute propriety for interest, and circumspection for feeling. How shall I say it? I love the abandonment to impulse, I act from impulse only, and I love to madness that others do the same by me.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* how far I am from being equal to you! I have not your virtues, I know no duties with my friend; I am closer to the state of nature; savages do not love with more simplicity and good faith. The world, misfortunes, evils, nothing has corrupted my heart. I shall never be on my guard against you; I shall never suspect you. You say that you have friendship for me; you are virtuous; what can I fear? I will let you see the trouble, the agitation of my soul, and I shall not blush to seem to you weak and inconsistent. I have already told you that I do not seek to please you; I do not wish to usurp your esteem. I prefer to deserve your indulgence — in short, I want to love you with all my heart and to place in you a confidence without reserve.

No, I do not think you "sly" [*fin*]; I think, as you do, that slyness is always a proof of famine of mind; but I do think you *stupid* for not understanding that which has been clearly designated to you. What matters his name? enough that it does not injure that which I have told you of himself. What surprises me is that I have named him to you a score of times; this proves to me, what I did not believe, that I can mention his name like that of any other man; but I shall be still more surprised if, when you return, you cannot distinguish him among the others; for I assure you he is not made to be lost in a crowd; you will see.

I saw the Chevalier d'Aguesseau to-day, and was proud to be able to give him news of you. With the other persons who expect to hear from you I have a contrary feeling. I fear to seem to them more fortunate than they, and thus get you blamed; for most women have no need of being loved, they only want to be preferred.

I shall be very glad to see the Chevalier de Chastellux once more; still, if I could add to his journey what I desire to subtract from yours, I should not see him soon. Observe, I beg of you, how I reverse the chronological order: I have loved the chevalier these eight years. Adieu; I have not told you that I am ill as a dumb animal; but my soul suffers less, therefore I must not complain.

Sunday, August 8, 1773.

What folly to go in search of you, to send my letter to await you in Breslau, where you will be occupied with the king, the troops, your successes, etc., and nothing will incline you to cast your eyes on Paris. I am wrong; Paris is too grand to be forgotten, but *me* you would overlook in the crowd. Nevertheless, if I did not fear to grieve you I should say: "There is no one who regrets you more sincerely than I." Every one is busy or dissipating. I alone, I believe,

cannot lose from sight that which distresses me, or that which I desire. I do not know how persons manage to grow used to privations; those that touch the soul are so keen! they have no compensations.

I cannot believe that it is only three months since you departed; still less can I conceive how I can wait for you till the end of November. Your presence could not fail to comfort me; I regret it as my pleasure. Ah! friendship, that blessing of nature, is it to me a fresh sorrow? Does all that affects my soul turn to poison? You were to me a charming acquaintance; your tone, your manners, your mind, they all pleased me; a higher degree of interest in you has spoiled all: I yielded myself up to the good you did me. Ah! why have you penetrated within my soul? Why did you show me yours? Why establish so intimate an intercourse between two persons whom all things separate? Is it you, or is it I, who are guilty of the species of pain from which I suffer? Sometimes I am arrested in my desire for your return by the fear that you will wound my friendship; and yet it is not exacting. You will be so occupied, so carried-away, so dissipated, that, perhaps, you may be as far from me in Paris as at Breslau. Well, so be it; I shall see you seldom and await you often; that will be something.

But are you not thinking to shorten your journey rather than prolong it? What can you see better or more interesting than what you are now seeing in Silesia? And then if you go to Sweden and do not write from there you will receive no letters; we may be three months without news of you, and that would no longer be absence, it would be death. In a word, be it justice or generosity, I must have news of you, and there is neither reason nor pretext which can justify you for being so long without writing to me as you were between Prague and Vienna. Reflect that you *owe* much to my con-

dition; I am ill, I am unhappy; does not that solicit your goodness? What it grants will be repaid by infinite gratitude. Good God! what a poor motive! what a pitiable sentiment! Do you not think so?

I have just read an extract from the "Eulogy on Colbert" now competing at the French Academy. The tone of it seemed to me so firm, so noble, so lofty, so original, that I suddenly wished it were yours. I do not know if the rest is as worthy, but you would not disavow the little I have seen of it.[1] I have had fever for some days; the last time I wrote to you I finished my letter while trembling in a chill. There is a certain postman who, for the past year, has given fever to my soul, but now it has attained my poor body. I feel destroyed; and I have always been so unfortunate that something tells me I shall die at the moment when my misfortunes end. Return, and at least I shall be sure of having tasted before I die a consolation very sweet to my soul. I reproach myself for ever having been unjust to you. *Mon Dieu!* you have suffered, and you will pardon me; there are situations which ask for so much indulgence!

I have read the long-expected book of M. Helvetius ["Of Man; his Intellectual Faculties and his Education," a posthumous work]. I was alarmed at its size; two volumes, of six hundred pages each! Your voracity would have made an end of it in two days; but as for me, I can no longer read with interest; my affections withhold my attention; I read what I feel, and not what I see. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how the mind shrinks by loving! it is true that the soul does not, but what can one do with a soul? I forgot to answer you about the affair of Comte de C . . .; it is even less advanced than at first; you could hardly believe what a poor creature he is on whom the matter depends; he is not stupid, but the

[1] It was by M. Necker, and took the prize. — Fr. Ed.

silliest of men. His wife is better than he; but the absorption she has in herself absorbs all her faculties. On the whole, they are persons whose real merit is to have a good cook. How many people of whom the world speaks well have no other value! No, the human species is not wicked; it is only silly, and in Paris it is as vain and frivolous as it is silly; but no matter, provided what one loves is kind, amiable, and excellent.

Ah! if you knew what amuses and attracts the public!—a tragedy by M. Dorat (devoid of wit, interest, and talent), and next a comedy by M. Dorat, which is a masterpiece of bad taste and bad style; it is an unintelligible jargon. The applause given to it really saddened me the other day; it is enough to discourage talent.

Sunday, August 15, 1773.

Listen to me, and once for all believe that I cannot wrong you, and you know why I cannot wrong you. I have not been negligent; this is my fifth letter since July 3d. I do not see why you had not received mine of July 15th on the 3d of August. I cannot endure the irregularities of the post; they are the torment of my life; but you surprise me, you, by attaching such importance to my letters. How could you have the idea that I meant to harass you? Punish you? —and for what? Supposing, what is assuredly not so, that I were dissatisfied with your friendship, have I the right to complain of it? Would it not be the height of impertinence to imagine that the loss of my letters was a painful privation to you? If I tell you that I am not so foolishly vain as most women, you are not obliged to believe me; but know me better and you will find that I receive as a favour that which is given me; that I enjoy it with feeling, and respond to it with all the tenderness and sincerity of my soul; but never do I feel myself prompted by the sort of

confidence that is found, not in the heart, but in a vanity that exacts from those we love, and sometimes dares to put them to the proof. Intercourse with the world has not altered the simplicity and truth of my sentiments. Remark that I am not praising, but defending myself.

I am sorry and uneasy about the pain in your leg; you do not take care of it, though you say you do; and I am more uneasy at that than for the pain itself. Alas! the great evil of absence is ignorance of the details that touch us closely. While saying much, still more is left unsaid; and it seems to me that my friend always omits that which I most need to know. Why do you wear yourself out with fatigue? The loss of sleep exhausts the brain, and, strong as you may be, I am certain that by sitting up all night you do not get the best of the things and objects you are seeking to observe — not to speak of the risk you run of weakening your health. To reach the object for which you aim, you must not only live, but keep well; in exalting the soul to the point of sacrificing all to its love of glory, I believe it is well to preserve the stomach. Ah! if you knew how physical sufferings belittle the soul you would not squander as you do your sleep and your strength. I am speaking a very trivial language to you, but it is that of friendship. Remark that those who wish to please never say a word of all this. The tone of interest has no grace, it is ponderous, it repeats itself — but it does not weary those who feel it for one who deserves it so well.

I cannot help thinking that the uneasiness in which you were when you wrote to me disturbed your judgment a little. You urged me to write to you without telling me where to address my letter. I know that you were not in Vienna after the 12th at the latest, yet I must send my letter there; there is no sense in that. And another thing, equally sense-

less, was writing to you at Breslau. But why, when making the tour of the world, should any one desire to hear from his friends? Yes, you are very inconsistent! in fact, there are moments when I am so weary that I am tempted to leave you on the way. I am ill, I am sad, and it seems to me that I should serve you best by letting myself be forgotten. The more kindness, the more feeling you might show me, the more I should dare to tell you that you will often repent having yielded yourself too quickly to an intimacy from which I alone obtain advantage.

There is a clause in your letter on which I dared not rest my eyes, though my soul fastened on it. *Mon Dieu!* what word was that you said! it froze my blood! No, no, my soul shall seek for yours no more. Ah! that thought will kill me! Be my consolation; calm, if you can, the trouble of my soul; but do not think that I could, for one instant, survive a disaster the very fear of which fills my life with a terror that has destroyed my health and disturbs, incessantly, my reason.

Adieu, I cannot continue; my heart is wrung; if I compose my mind I will resume; because I must justify myself on the matter of which you speak, and ask your pardon, though I am not guilty.

Still Sunday.

I intended to warn you that I had repeated your remark on the King of Prussia, which was so charming that I thought I might do so without impropriety. It was thought what it is, and it went far and wide until it reached Mme. du Deffand, who thought it very bad, and twisted and commented upon it, and found, as she thought, many contradictions to it. She ended by saying that if your "Connétable" were another "Athalie" it would not prevent her from thinking the form and basis of that thought of yours detestable. Some days later she spoke of it in the same

tone to the Neapolitan ambassador [Caraccioli]; this made him angry, and he told her that when people criticised they ought to quote honestly, and by changing the words of the speech he thought her criticism as unjust as it was severe. Mme. de Luxembourg and Mme. de Beauvau, before whom this occurred and who were against Mme. du Deffand, asked the ambassador for a copy of the actual remark; he promised it; then he came and told me the whole of this silly dispute, and I own that the pleasure of confounding Mme. du Deffand made me yield to his request. I copied the three lines for him and he went off triumphant. Mme. du Deffand was confounded; at any rate she dared no longer disparage that which everybody else thought charming. Until then, there had been no question to whom you had written it. She now took it into her head to ask that question; the ambassador refused to reply, and this increased her curiosity. Finally, he said it was written to me, and added: "No doubt it was a presentiment that made you condemn a saying so full of wit and grace." — There 's a long tale; I should have told you earlier, but it seemed to me rather paltry to send a thousand leagues. I must add that the ambassador brought the copy back to me, and I burned it. Just see what silly things occupy these people of the world! what empty minds it proves! Yes, unhappiness is good for something; it corrects the little passions which agitate the idle and the corrupt. Ah! if they could only *love* they would all become good.

You can see, now, whether I was guilty of indiscretion. If you say I was, I shall believe it; but do not tell me that people will think "we write to each other to say witty things." Ah! what matter to us if fools and malicious people think so? They are strong only when they are feared; I hate and flee them, but I fear them no longer. For sev-

eral years I have so weighed and estimated those who judge that I dare not tell you the contempt I have for opinion. I do not wish to brave it, and that is all. There is a passion that closes the soul to all the miseries which torture the people of the great world; I have the sad experience of it. A great woe kills all the rest. There is but one interest, one pleasure, one misfortune, and a single judge for me in all creation. Oh! no, I am not petty. Reflect that I hold to life at one point only; if it escapes me, I shall die. From this inward conviction, profound and permanent, you can readily believe that all else is annihilated for me. I know not by what fatality — or what good fortune — I became susceptible of a new affection: searching within myself I can neither find nor explain its cause; but, such as it is, its effects have brought sweetness to my life. It seems to me an astounding thing that my sorrows should interest you; it proves to me the goodness, the sensibility of your heart. I reproach myself, just now, for the remorse I have felt in yielding to my penchant for you: sorrow makes one severe to one's self; I feel guilty for the good you do me. Is it now, or was it then that I made myself illusions? On my honour I do not know. But you, whose soul is not convulsed by trouble, you can judge me better; and when I see you, you will tell me if I ought to rejoice or despair at the feelings you inspire within me. — I received yesterday news of him which alarms me; his health does not improve; he is perpetually threatened by a fatal attack from which he has been twice at death's door within a year; how is it possible that he should live? Adieu; send me news of yourself.

Monday, August 16, 1773.

I open my letter to tell you how conscious I am of your kindness in being so uneasy at receiving no letter from me.

I cannot imagine why; for my friends take my letters themselves to the general post-office. Why have you renounced your journey to the North? I cannot believe it is solely to shorten the period of your absence. To whom are you making the sacrifice of Sweden? If some one has exacted it, you are doubtless content. Well, if your return is hastened I will love the person or thing that is the cause of it. But next year? must you go to Russia? and must you not go at once to Montauban? and then to that country-seat where you will find pleasure and seek happiness, and then — and then — but no matter, anything is better than Sweden; and I know not — that is, something tells me not to be anxious about what may happen next year; as you say yourself, there is time between now and then to die a hundred times.

You have made me a reproach; I have a mind to return it: are you guilty of what the Chevalier de Chastellux has written to me, namely, that I love you deeply? How does he know it? I have given my secret to none but you and him to whom I tell all. Can it be that you have told the Chevalier? If it were so, I could only thank you, and complain.

M. d'Alembert is at this moment with Mme. Geoffrin. I do not doubt she will think it a pleasure to write to the King of Poland [Stanislas-Poniatowski]. It occurs to me that in this long letter I have omitted a rather interesting point: my health; it is detestable; I cough frightfully, and with such effort that I spit blood. I spend a part of my life unable to speak; my voice is extinct, but this of all inconveniences is the one that suits the inclinations of my soul the best; I like silence, meditation, retirement. I do not sleep, or scarcely so, and I am never dull. You will think from this that I must be very happy. If I add that I would not change my condition for that of any other living being you will think

me in paradise — and you will be wrong; to go there one must die, and that is what I wish to do. But come; and write me often, often.

August 22, 1773.

I received yesterday your letter of the 10th, and it has done me good. If you only knew what I have suffered during the last eight days! how wrung with grief my heart has been! in what distress, in what alarms my life is spent! I have no longer the liberty to free myself; it is awful; and it is not in the power of him I love to make my troubles cease. He knows them, he suffers from them, he is still more unhappy than I, because his soul is stronger, and has more energy, more sensibility than mine. For one whole year every moment of his life has been marked by misfortune; he must die of it, yet he wills that I shall live. Oh! my God! my soul cannot suffice for what it feels and what it suffers. See my weakness, see how sorrow makes one selfish and indiscreet; I make you think of me, I sadden you perhaps. Ah! forgive me; this excess of confidence comes from my friendship, my tender friendship for you. You have shown me such kindness, such indulgence that it seems to me I cannot abuse it. If you, alas! were to suffer, who could feel and share it more than I? You see within my soul, you know what it has for you. Ah! I feel, at the summit of woe, invoking death at every instant, that it will cost me a regret to leave you; you console me, and yet I sink beneath the weight of my sorrows — No, no! they are not mine that rend me, they are his, for which I have neither remedy nor consolation: that is the torture of a feeling and devoted soul. You have loved, you will understand and pity me.

After what you wrote to M. d'Alembert I counted on seeing you by the end of September, and now I find you

will not be here till the end of October; but will you be here then? Alas! I know not if I may dare to hope so far before me. Perhaps I am speaking to you now for the last time. I dare not permit myself either hope or project. Ah! I had suffered much from the injustice and malignancy of men; they reduced me to despair; but I here avow that there is no sorrow comparable to that of a deep, unhappy passion: it has effaced my ten years' early torture. It seems to me that I live only since I love; all that affected me, all that rendered me unhappy until then is obliterated; and yet in the eyes of calm and reasonable people I have no sorrows but those I have ceased to feel; they call passion a fictitious sorrow. Alas! it is because they love nothing, because they live only for vanity and ambition, and I, I live only to love; no longer have I the tone or the feelings of society. More than that, I am incapable of fulfilling its duties; but fortunately I am free, I am independent, and in yielding myself up wholly to my inclinations I have no remorse, because I harm no one. But see how little you ought to think of me; I reproach myself often for the kindness and the esteem that is shown to me; I usurp so much in society; people judge me too favourably because they do not know me. It is true that I have been so great a victim to calumny and the malice of enemies that I feel my present position to be a sort of compensation.

May I make you a reproach? my friendship misses your confidence; you no longer tell me of yourself; why is that? I was unjust to you once, I know; is it thus you punish me? How is it that if you love you have nothing to say to me? You suffer, you hope, you enjoy; why, then, do you tell me nothing? You speak to me so little of yourself that your letters might go to nearly every woman of your acquaintance. It is not so with mine; they can go to but one

address. Am I wrong? is it too much to exact equality in confidence? This is the fourth letter you have still to acknowledge, do not forget that. I think it was folly to have written to you at Breslau; you may not have thought of the post and my letter will still be there. You must burn all my letters. I fancy that I see them falling in great bundles from your pockets; the disorder in which you keep your papers affects my confidence — but you see it does not check it. Adieu. I have pain in my chest. Is your leg cured? Send me news of yourself.

Monday, September 6, 1773.

Your silence hurts me. I do not blame you, but I suffer, and I can scarcely persuade myself that if your interest were equal to mine I should be one month without hearing from you. *Mon Dieu!* tell me, what value do you place on friendship if absence and travel distract you from it wholly? Ah! how fortunate you are! A king, an emperor, troops, camps, can make you forget the one who loves you and (more touching perhaps to a feeling soul) the person whom your friendship sustains and consoles. No; I do not blame you; I even wish that your forgetfulness did not seem to me a wrong; I should like to find within me the disposition that approves of all, or suffers all without complaint.

I know not why I was persuaded that I should hear from you at Breslau whether you received my letter, or whether it were lost; my hope was balked. Oh! I hate you for making me know hope, fear, pain, pleasure; I had no need of those emotions — why did you not leave me in repose? My soul had no need to love; it was filled with a tender sentiment, profound, participated, mutual, but sorrowful nevertheless; and that sorrow was the emotion that drew me to you. I meant that you should only please me, but you have

touched me; in consoling me you have bound me to you, and the singular thing is that the good you have done me, which I received without consenting to it, far from rendering me supple, docile, like other persons who receive favours, seems, on the contrary, to have given me the right to be exacting on your friendship. You, who judge from heights and see into depths, tell me if that is the action of an ungrateful soul, or of one too sensitive: whatever you say of it I shall believe.

Return speedily; I see the days slip by with a pleasure I cannot express. They say the past is nothing; but as for me, it crushes me; it is precisely because I have suffered so much that it is so dreadful to me to suffer still. Ah! but there is madness in promising myself some sweetness, some consolation in your friendship; you will have gained so many new ideas, your soul has been agitated by so many diverse sentiments that no trace of the impression you received of my sorrow and my confidence will remain. But come, come at any rate; I shall judge, and I shall see clear — for illusions are not for the sorrowful. Besides, you have as much openness as I have truth; we shall not for one moment deceive ourselves; come, therefore, and do not bring back from your journey the melancholy impressions the Chevalier de Chastellux has brought from Italy. He speaks of all that he has seen without pleasure, and all that he now sees gives him but little more. I would not change my ways of thinking for his, and yet I pass my life in convulsions of fear and pain; but then, what I expect, what I desire, what I obtain, what is given to me, has such value to my soul! I live, I exist with such force that there are moments when I find myself loving madly to my own unhappiness. Ought I not to cling to it? ought it not to be dear to me? It caused me to know you, to love you, and,

perhaps, to have one friend the more — for you tell me so. If I had been calm, reasonable, cold, all this would not have happened. I should vegetate with the other women, who flirt their fans and discuss the sentence on M. de Morangies and the arrival of the Comtesse de Provence.

Yes, I repeat it: I prefer my griefs to all that people in society call happiness and pleasure. I may die of them perhaps, but that is better than never having lived. Do you understand me? are you on my key? have you forgotten that you too have been as ill, but more fortunate than I? Adieu; I do not know how it is, I meant to write you four lines only, but my pleasure in doing so has led me on. How many persons are there whom you will see on your return with greater pleasure than you will me? I will give you the list: Madame de . . . , the Chevalier d'Aguesseau, the Comte de Broglie, the Prince de Beauvau, the Comte de Rochambeau, etc., etc., and Mesdames de Beauvau, de Boufflers, de Rochambeau, de Martinville, etc., etc.; then the Chevalier de Chastellux, and then I, at last, *the* last. Ah! see the difference: I can name but one against your ten; the heart does not conduct itself by law and justice; it is despotic and absolute. I forgive you; but — return.

M. d'Alembert awaits you with impatience. The Chevalier de Chastellux is absorbed by the comedies at Mme. d'Épinay's, but his tone is cold and sad. Adieu; do you really think that I shall see you in a month? That is too far off to feel any pleasure from it yet.

November, 1773.

Here I am: courage failed me! When I have not what I love I prefer to be alone: I talk then to my friends more intimately, — more unreservedly. I have just written for three hours, and I am blinded by it, but not wearied. Mme. de Boufflers permits me to ask you for a copy of her letter;

bring it to me to-morrow, I beg of you; and bring me also the continuation of your journey which gives me such infinite pleasure. Is it in the morning or is it in the evening that I am to see you? I should like the morning, because that is sooner, and the evening, because that is longer, but I shall like whatever you choose to give me. Adieu; I did not sleep last night.

Half-past eight o'clock, 1773.

Mon ami, I shall not see you, and you will tell me that it is not your fault! but if you had had the thousandth part of the desire I have to see you, you would be here, and I should be happy. No, I am wrong, I should suffer; but I should not envy the pleasures of heaven. *Mon ami,* I love you as one should love, to excess, to madness, with transport and despair. All these last days you have put my soul to the torture; I saw you this morning, and I forgot it all! It seems to me that I cannot do enough for you in loving you with all my soul, in being in the mind to live and die for you. You are worth more than that; yes, if I only loved you, it would be nothing; for what is sweeter and more natural than to love wildly that which is perfectly lovable? *Mon ami,* I can do better than love, I know how to suffer; I know how to renounce my pleasure for your happiness. But there is one who troubles the satisfaction I should have in proving to you that I love you.

Do you know why I write to you? Because it pleases me; you would never think it if I did not tell you. But oh! where are you? If you are happy I must not complain that you have taken happiness from me.

December, 1773.

Good-morning, *mon ami.* Have you slept? how are you? shall I see you? Ah! take nothing from me; the time is so short and I set such value on that which I spend in seeing

you. *Mon ami,* I have no opium in my head, nor in my blood; I have worse than that, I have that which would make me bless heaven and treasure life if he I love were inspired with the same emotion; but alas! what we love is made to be the torment, the despair of the soul that feels? Good-bye; I want to see you, you ought to come and dine with me at Mme. Geoffrin's. I dared not tell you so last night. Yes, you ought to love me passionately; I exact nothing; I pardon all; and I have never had an angry feeling, *mon ami;* I am perfect, for I love you in perfection.

Four o'clock, 1773.

You have not started; at least, I hope not. This is what I fancy you will have said to yourself: "The weather is dreadful; I will go to-morrow to the country, I will be driven there; I will *see her* this afternoon; I will go and spend the evening with Mme. de V . . ." *Mon ami,* if you can reason thus, M. d'Alembert will permit you to argue in future, and you will not be reduced to making or not making Connétables. Racine would never have allowed any one to prevent him from writing his "Letters" on the Visionaries or his "History of Port-Royal." Here are the two volumes; I warn you that if you lose them you will be lost in M. d'Alembert's opinion. Here is also Plutarch; that is mine; but, if it is all the same to you, I would rather it were not lost or torn.

I saw Mme. de M . . . at mass and spoke to her. Her face and figure satisfy the most fastidious and exacting taste; but her tone, her manner, ah! how repulsive they are! Am I wrong? But her friend does not resemble her; yes, I believe this, and I even desire it; is this feeling generous? tell me.

No, you shall never know all that the ambassador wrote

to me; but hear this: he said that, judging by appearances, M. de G . . . had obtained that which M. de M . . . had desired to obtain; and then he added: "I am not afraid lest his piercing eyes should see these words; I consent that those of M. de M . . . should read this letter as he reads your soul," etc.; adding a hundred lively little jests very gay and clever; he is certainly charming, but quite undeserving of being loved. — *Mon ami*, you advised me yesterday not to love you; is it I or yourself whom you wish to save from that misfortune? — tell me. I have an infallible remedy: how sweet it will be to me if I can think that I do anything for you.

Mon ami, this soul which is like a thermometer, now at freezing, then at temperate, and a moment after at the burning heat of the equator, this soul, thus carried away by an irresistible force, finds it hard to curb and calm itself; it longs for you, it fears you, it loves you, it wanders in a wilderness, but always it belongs to you and to its regrets.

1774.

Mon ami, yesterday, coming home at midnight, I found your letter. I did not expect such good luck; but what grieves me is the number of days that must pass without my seeing you. Ah! if you knew what the days are, what the life is, stripped of the interest and the pleasure of seeing you! *Mon ami*, amusements, occupations, activity are all you need, but I, my happiness is you, and only you; I would not wish to live if I could not see you, could not love you at every instant of my life. Send me news of yourself, and come and dine to-morrow with Comte C . . . He asked me to change from Sunday to Saturday; I said yes; but come there, I entreat you. I was to dine to-day at the Spanish ambassador's, but I have excused myself; if you were to be there

I would not have done so. Good-bye. I am expecting the letter you promised me. I am much hurried.

1774.

I yield to the need of my heart, *mon ami:* I love you; I feel as much pleasure and anguish as if it were the first and the last time in my life that I should say those words to you. Ah! why have you condemned me to say them? Why am I reduced to do so? You will know some day — alas! you will then understand me. It is dreadful to me to be no longer free to suffer for you and through you. Is that loving you enough? Adieu, *mon ami.*

At all the instants of my life. 1774.

Mon ami, I suffer, I love you, and I await you.

Tuesday, 1774.

Mon ami, you make me prove that we like better to give than to pay our debts. I have several letters to answer, and to come to them I must begin by talking with you. *Mon ami,* have you given me, since last night, one minute, two minutes? Have you said, "She suffers, she loves me, and I must blame myself for a part of her sorrows"? It is not to distress you or to give you remorse that I say that, but to make you kind, indulgent, and not angry when a few cries of pain escape me. As for me, I have thought of you, and much, but my time has been occupied. — Good God! was there ever such pride, such disdain of others, such contempt, such injustice, in a word, such an assemblage and assortment of all that peoples hell and lunatic asylums? *All that* was last night in my apartment, and the walls and ceilings did not crumble down; a miracle!

In the midst of the sorry writers, smatterers, fools, and pedants, among whom I spent my day, I thought of you alone

and of your follies; I regretted you; I longed for you with as much passion as if you were the most amiable, most reasonable being that existed. I cannot explain to myself the charm that binds me to you. You are not my friend; you can never become so: I have no sort of confidence in you; you have caused me the deepest, sharpest pain that can afflict and rend an honest soul; you deprive me at this moment, and perhaps forever, of the only consolation that heaven granted to the few remaining days I have to live, — how shall I say it? You have filled all; the past, the present, and the future present me nothing but pain, regrets, remorse. Ah! *mon ami*, I see, I judge it all, yet I am drawn to you by an attraction, by a feeling which I abhor, but which has the power of a curse and a fatality. You do well not to consider me; I have no right to require anything of you; for my most ardent wish is that you were nothing to me. What would you say of the state of a most unhappy being who showed herself to you for the first time agitated, convulsed by feelings so diverse and contradictory? You would pity her; your heart would be stirred; you would want to succour, to comfort that unfortunate creature. *Mon ami*, it is I; this sorrow, it is you who have caused it; this soul of fire and pain is your creation (ah! I still think you godlike), and you ought to repent of your work.

When I took my pen I did not know one word of what I should say to you; I meant only to tell you to come and dine to-morrow, Wednesday, at Mme. Geoffrin's. I meant to show you that you alone of all my friends oblige me to wait for what I earnestly desire, "Le Connétable." It is mine; I might have refused to give it to you, and now it is I who persecute you to return it. Ah! *mon Dieu!* neither cares, nor interest, nor attentions, nor any desire to please, — occasionally a kindness that resembles pity; and *with it all*, or *with-*

out it all, I love you wildly. Pity me, but do not tell me so. Bring back my letters; yes, do that.

Three o'clock, 1774.

It was not myself who answered you. If you love me it must have made you uneasy, and I shall be grieved to have caused you a pain I could have avoided. I was in a state of anguish, like the agony of death, preceded by a fit of tears which lasted four hours. No, never, never did my soul feel such despair. I have a sort of terror which bewilders my reason. I await Wednesday, and it seems to me that death itself is not sufficient remedy for the loss I fear; it needs no courage to die, but it is awful to live. It is beyond my strength to think that, perhaps, the one I love, he who loved me, will hear me no more, will never come again to succour me. He views death with horror because the thought of me is added to it. He wrote me on the 10th, "I have in me that which will make you forget all that I have made you suffer;" and that very day the fatal hemorrhage struck him down!

Ah! *mon Dieu!* you who have known passion, despair, can you conceive my sorrow? Pity me so long as I shall live, but never regret the unhappy being who has existed eight days in a state of suffering to which thought cannot attain. Adieu. If I must live, if my sentence is not pronounced, I may still find sweetness, charm, and consolation in your friendship; will you preserve it for me?

1774.

I distrustful, and of you! Think with what complete surrender I have given myself to you; not only have I put no distrust, no caution, into my conduct, but I should not even know regret or remorse if it were my happiness alone that I had compromised. Oh! *mon ami!* I know not if I now

love better, but he who made me unfaithful and guilty, he for whom I live after losing the object and interest of every moment of my life, is he who has had most empire over my soul, he who has taken from me the liberty to live solely for another and to die when neither hope nor desire remains to me![1] No doubt I have been held to life by the same spell that drew me towards you, that potent charm attached to your presence, which intoxicates my soul and bewilders it to such excess that the memory of my sorrow is effaced. *Mon ami,* with three words you have created a new soul within me, you have filled it with an interest so keen, a sentiment so tender, so profound, that I lose the faculty to recall the past and to foresee the future.

Yes, *mon ami,* I live in you; I exist because I love you; and that is so true that it seems to me impossible not to die if I should lose the hope of seeing you. The happiness of having seen you, the desire, the expectation of seeing you again aid and sustain me against my grief. Alas! what would become of me if, instead of hope, I had only the sorrowful regret of not seeing you? *Mon ami,* with you I have not been able to die, without you I neither could — nor would I — live. Ah! if you knew what I suffer, what dreadful laceration my heart feels when I am left to myself, when your presence, or your thought no longer sustains me! Ah! it is then that the memory of M. de Mora becomes a sentiment so active, so piercing, that my life, my feelings cause me horror. I abhor the aberration, the passion that made me guilty, that made me cast trouble and fear into that sensitive soul that was all my own.

Mon ami, do you conceive to what point I love you? You

[1] The Marquis de Mora died at Bordeaux, May 27, 1774, on his way from Madrid to Paris, drawn there by his passionate desire to return to Mlle. de Lespinasse.—Fr. Ed.

divert the regrets, the remorse, that rend my heart: alas! they would suffice to deliver me from a life I hate; you alone and my sorrow remain to me in this wide world; I have no more interest in it, no ties, no friends, and I need none: to love you, to see you, or to cease to exist — that is the last and only prayer of my soul. Yours does not respond to it, I know; but I do not complain of that. By a strange caprice, which I feel but cannot explain, I am far from desiring to find in you that which I have lost: it would be too much; what human being has better felt than I all the value of that life? Is it not enough to have blessed and cherished that nature once? How many thousands of men have crossed this earth without compare to him! Oh! how I have been loved! A soul of fire, full of energy, which had judged all things, estimated all things, and then, turning away revolted by all, gave itself up to the need and joy of loving — *mon ami*, that is how I was loved.

Several years went by, filled with the charm and the sorrows inseparable from a passion as strong as it was deep, and then you came to pour poison into my heart, to ravage my soul with trouble and remorse. My God! what have you not made me suffer! You tore me from my feeling, but I saw you were not mine. Do you not see the whole horror of that situation? How is it that I have lived through such woe? How can one still find gentleness to say: "*Mon ami*, I love you, and with such truth and tenderness that it is not possible your soul be cold as it hears me"? Adieu.

Friday, after post time.

You are "displeased;" see if you ought to be; what soul have you ever inspired with a stronger or more tender feeling? *Mon ami*, in whatever way you regard and judge my soul, I defy you to find anything in it to displease you. Oh!

I am sure of it; never have you been so loved. But do not make me say why — I cannot write to you *where you are;* I dare not acknowledge to myself the reason; it is a thought, an emotion, on which I do not wish to dwell; it is a sort of torture which horrifies me, which humiliates me, and one which I have never yet known.

You ask me how I liked the habit of seeing you daily. Oh, no! it was not a habit; it never could become one. How cold such colours are, how monotonous! they cannot be compared with the violent and rapid emotions which the name and presence of the one we love excite. No, no, I have not been happy enough to give myself the illusion that you would come and see me; thus I did not hear the opening and closing of my door. But without interests, without desires, what matters it what people see or hear? Given over to my regrets, I feel but one need; I implore either you or death. You soothe my soul, you fill it with so tender a sentiment that it is sweet to live during the time that I see you; but there is nought but death that can deliver me from misery in your absence.

Midnight, 1774.

So you have forgotten, abandoned, that fury, so foolish and so wicked both! but had you left her in hell itself she would not complain; the heat and activity of that abode would make her live. Instead of that, the unhappy creature spent her day in purgatory; she awaited a consoling angel who did not come. He was no doubt making the happiness and joy of some celestial being, himself intoxicated with the joys of heaven. In that condition what could recall me to him; and if in truth he is really happy, I desire, from the bottom of my soul, that nothing may remind him of me; for I am sufficiently unjust to detest his happiness and to wish that remorse and repentance may pursue him perpetually.

I wish him worse still, namely: that he may love no more, and that he may henceforth inspire indifference only. Those are the prayers, that is the wish of the soul that has loved him best and has the greatest need of extinction forever.

1774.

I am alone at this moment and I wish to tell you at once that I do not count upon you to go to the Duchesse d'Anville's. You will be always agreeable to me, but seldom useful, and I wish I could add, little necessary. In trying to restore my confidence, you prove to me how justly my distrust was founded; for I still miss three letters, one, especially, in which I spoke to you of Gonsalve [M. de Mora]. You will doubtless find those three letters in some pocket of your portfolio; perhaps they are with that fourth volume that I ought to receive to-day.

I notice that you make it your pleasure to pay attentions to Mme. de . . . ; you give, and lend her, whatever gives you pleasure; to me, it is the opposite extreme, — negligence, forgetfulness, refusal. It is three months since you promised me a book which belongs to you; I have now borrowed it from some one else. No doubt it is best that this disobliging manner should fall on me; that is only right, and I complain solely of the excess of it. Good-night! If work costs you your nights, you must regret very much the useless visits that fill your days. Among the letters you have sent back to me one is not mine; but I swear that I will never return it to you.

1774.

Return to me the two old letters. I am not asking you for those of Cicero or Pliny. I desire not to see you, never to see you again. Regret is better — is it not? — than remorse.

At the moment when you receive this I will wager that

you have already received a note in which you were told . . . I don't know what.

Eh! *mon Dieu!* believe her, give her peace, and if it is possible, be happy yourself: that is the wish, that is the prayer of the unhappy woman who has always before her eyes the dreadful inscription on the portal of hell: "Give up all hope, ye who enter here." I have no hope, and I wish for none. I ought to have annihilated myself on the day I was left solitary. You prevented it, and you cannot now console me.

May 11, 1774.

You do not know me yet; it is almost impossible to wound my self-love; and the heart is so indulgent! In fact, the party of last night was like those insipid novels which make the author and the readers yawn together. However, one must say with the King of Prussia, on a rather more memorable occasion, "We will do better next time." That which makes an epoch remains in the memory, and you will never forget in future that the day on which Louis XV. died you spent the evening at a party in a sound sleep. Believe me, there are recollections more painful than that. Good-bye.

Eleven o'clock at night. 1774.

I will wager that you are not as sleepy to-day as you were yesterday at the same hour; and the reason is very simple; you are being amused, interested, and you have the desire to please. *Mon ami*, you were not made for privacy; you need expansion; movement and the hurly-burly of society is necessary to you; this is not a need of your vanity; it is that of your activity. Confidence, tenderness, forgetfulness of self and of vanity, all those blessings felt and appreciated by a tender and passionate soul, clog and extinguish yours. Yes, I repeat it: you have no need of being loved. What a

strange mistake was mine! and *I* dare to blame certain persons for lack of discernment! *I* dare to tell them that they observe nothing and do not know men. Ah! how misled I was; mistaken to excess! How is it that my intelligence did not check my soul? How can it be that, judging you incessantly, I was, nevertheless, always carried away? You do not know the half of your ascendency over me; you do not know what you have to conquer each time that I see you; you have never suspected the sacrifices that I make to you; you do not know the degree to which I renounce my own self in order to be yours. I say to you with Phèdre, "Often was I forced to deprive myself of tears."

Yes, *mon ami,* I deprive myself, with you, of all that is most dear to me. I never speak to you now of my regrets, nor of my memories; and, what is more cruel still, I let you see but a part of the feelings with which you fill my heart. I restrain the passion you excite in my soul; I say to myself incessantly: "He will not respond to it, he will not understand me, and I should die of pain." Can you conceive, *mon ami,* the species of torture to which I am condemned? I have remorse for what I give you, and regrets for what I am forced to keep back. I give myself up to you, but I do not give myself up to my own feeling for you; yielding to you, I nevertheless battle within myself. Ah! can you understand me? can you know through thought what I feel, and what you have made me suffer? Yes, you will have a return towards me, because you have the sensibility that feels an interest in the unhappy and pities them.

But I know not why I thus unbosom myself for an instant; I know that I shall find no comfort in your heart. *Mon ami,* it is empty of tenderness and feeling. You have but one means of lifting me from my troubles: it is that of

intoxicating me, and that remedy has been the greatest of my misfortunes.

Good-night, *mon ami;* send me news of yourself; my footman has orders to return for your answer. Tell me what you expect to do to-morrow; tell me if I shall see you: I would rather it were not in the morning, because I must then receive a long and wearisome visit; but I want to see you nevertheless. Remember that on Saturday and Sunday I shall be deprived of that happiness.

Adieu again; I am much fatigued. I have seen, I think, forty persons to-day, and I desired to see but one — one whose thoughts very certainly have not been turned even once to me. *Mon ami,* if you were happy I would approve of your manner of living; but this vagueness, this void, this agitation, this perpetual movement, this habit of being neither occupied by work nor inspired by feeling, this continued expenditure which impoverishes, with no return in pleasure, or reputation, or interest, or fame! — ah! *mon ami,* you do not deserve that Nature should have treated you so well; she has been prodigal towards you, and you are but a spendthrift. But I, I ruin myself for you, and it oppresses without enriching you. Yes, I weary you; you feel a disgust for my letters, and in that I admire the correctness and delicacy of your taste; but while I esteem such good taste I grieve that you have almost no indulgence or kindliness.

Four hours after midday, 1774.

Certainly, *mon ami,* I do not keep to the *lex talionis* at this moment, for it is not with me that you are occupied. Eh! *mon Dieu!* how could you think of me in the midst of so many and such charming objects of distraction, when I cannot keep your thoughts fixed when we are tête à tête? Do you know why I prefer to see you in the evening? Be-

cause those hours put a stop to your activity. There is no way then of going to see Madame Such-a-one, or Gluck, etc., or of doing a hundred useless things, in which you seem to take an interest solely to leave me earlier. Do not think that these are reproaches; they are only remarks which I cannot, with the degree of interest that I feel, prevent myself from making. But I am so far from wishing to exact anything that I tell myself, a hundred times a day, it is *myself* over whom I ought to hold empire; I ought to reduce my feelings to the point where, not having sufficient force to wring the soul, we claim nothing and are grateful for all; in other words, if passion be in my soul I ought to conquer it rather than seek to make you share it. And do you know, *mon ami*, what it is that may enable me to find the strength to do so? It is the inward conviction which I have that it is not in you to make the happiness of an active and passionate soul. I shall not say to you what it would be so natural to think, namely: that I am not made to inspire a deep sentiment; that I ought not to pretend to please, to fix a heart. All that is true, no doubt; but it is not that which makes me tell you that it is not in you to make the happiness of a strong and feeling soul. I will give to that soul the face of Mme. de Forcalquier, the nobleness of Mme. de Brionne, the graces of Aglaë, and the wit of Mme. de . . . adorned, or rather, grafted with that of Mme. de Boufflers, and when I have composed that perfect being I say again that it is not in you to make her happiness. Why so? Ah! why? — because, with you, *loving* is a mere incident of your age, and is not a part of your soul, though it agitates it occasionally; your soul is, above all things, lofty, noble, grand, active, but it is neither tender nor impassioned.

Ah! believe me, I am in despair at seeing to such depths; I have such need of loving, such pleasure in loving that

which I find worthy of love. It is so impossible for me to love moderately that the greatest misfortune that could happen to me would be to discover in you that which alone could arrest, and perhaps extinguish, my feeling; for, I will own it honestly, I do not find it in me to love alone. With the opposite conviction I have the strength of the martyrs; I fear no sort of sorrow. While suffering, and suffering much, I can still cherish life, still adore and bless him who makes me suffer; but only on condition of being loved — loved from attraction; not from gratitude, from delicacy, from virtue, — all *that* is detestable; it can only wither and cast down a feeling soul. Ah! let us never make of the greatest blessing that Nature has bestowed upon man a thing of pity.

Mon ami, there are moments when I feel myself your equal. I have strength, elevation, and a sovereign contempt for all that is vile and unworthy; and I have also a contempt for death so fixed in my soul that, under whatever aspect it presents itself, it cannot frighten me for an instant; in fact, it is almost always an active want within me.

From this knowledge that I have of myself and of you, I say to you again: Let us love each other, or let us part forever; let us put truth and generosity into our conduct, and esteem ourselves enough to believe that all is possible to us except deceiving each other and living in that state of trouble and fear which comes, necessarily, from the uncertainty of being loved. In that state, *mon ami*, one has confidence neither in one's self nor in the one we love; we enjoy nothing. For example: at this moment I desire passionately that you may return to-night from Auteuil [Mme. de Bouffler's country-seat], and then, a moment later, it seems to me that I wish you to remain there. Can you conceive the suffering caused by this inward combat between

the desire of the soul and a will which comes only from reflection? *Conclusion:* I love you to frenzy, and something tells me it is not thus that you ought to be loved. That *something* makes such noise around my soul that I am ready to hush all else, and give myself up completely to that dreadful truth.

Mon ami, I send you back your works that you may be yourself their censor: put the last touches to them, and be assured that no one in the world attaches as much value as I to all that you do, and all that you are capable of doing. Without being vain, it seems to me one could put one's vanity, pride, virtue, pleasure, in short, one's whole existence, into loving you; but that is not what I was saying just now. No, but then I was saying what I thought, what I knew, and now I am carried away into telling you what I feel. My soul is so strong to love, and my mind is so small, so weak, so limited, that I ought to forbid myself all expressions and actions that do not come from my heart. It is my heart that speaks when I say to you: "I await you, I love you, I would fain be wholly yours, and die."

Adieu; here come visitors. I am so occupied with you, I am so deeply filled with my regrets, that society is nothing more to me than importunity and constraint. There are but two ways of living that now seem good to me, — to see you, or to be alone; but alone, without books, without lights, without noise. I am far from complaining of my sleeplessness, it is the good time of my twenty-four hours. Observe, I beg of you, how much it costs me to quit you; whereas you have no impulse towards me — not a thought! Are you the happier for that? Yes.

Friday, 1774.

How kind of you to send me an account of what you do, of what you are thinking, of what occupies you! How I love

the ardour, the activity of your soul and of your mind! *Mon ami*, you have so many ways of attaining glory that you ought not to desire that of war. Give yourself up to your talent, your genius; *write*, and by enlightening and interesting men you will acquire the most flattering of all fame to a sensitive and virtuous soul; by thus *doing good* you will enjoy the best-deserved celebrity, — in truth, the only desirable celebrity in this age, where the choice lies between that and baseness and frivolity. Ah! how dreadful it would be to me to live again the life I led for ten years. I saw vice in action so closely, was so often the victim of the base and petty passions of persons of society, that I still retain an invincible disgust and fear, which make me prefer complete solitude to an odious existence.

I am dying of a desire to see your play; you must have created the subject [Anne Boleyn], for in itself it does not seem to me to admit of interest and action in more than a few scenes. You will have all the more merit in seizing and interesting attention during five acts; Racine had that magic art in "Bérénice." Your subject is grander and nobler, and well on the tone of your soul. You will not need to rise to heights, for you are always, without effort, on the level of what seems exalted to common and vulgar souls.

Yes, *mon ami*, my days are as usual; but I shall soon be alone: all my friends are leaving Paris, and for the first time in my life their departure does not cost me a regret; and, if it did not seem too ungrateful, I should tell you that I could see M. d'Alembert depart with a sort of pleasure. His presence weighs on my soul; it makes me dissatisfied with myself: I feel myself unworthy of his affection and his virtues. Judge, therefore, of my condition of mind, when that which ought to be a consolation adds to my unhappiness — but I do not want to be consoled; my regrets, my memories are dearer

to me than all the attentions and the support of friendship. *Mon ami,* my soul must either be lifted wholly out of its sorrow (and none but you have the power to do this) or it must make that sorrow its sole nourishment. If you knew how empty and cold books seem to me; how useless I feel it to talk and answer! My first impulse is to say to myself: Why should I? what is the good of it? and I have not yet found an answer to that question; which results sometimes in my being two hours without saying a word, and for a month past I have not touched a pen except to write to you. I know well that such a manner rebuffs friends: but I consent to that; my soul is inured to hardships, it fears no little woes. Ah! how sorrow concentrates us! how little we need when we have lost all! What blessings I owe you, *mon ami;* what mercies I ought to return to you! You have restored life to my soul; you have made me feel an interest in awaiting the morrow; you promise me news of yourself: that hope fixes my thoughts. You promise me still more; I am to see you; but I shall say to you like Andromaque, "To less favours than that the unhappy lay claim."

Adieu; I abuse both your time and your kindness; but it is sweet, it is natural to forget all with those we love. My wound is so sharp, my soul is so sick, my body so suffering that, were you susceptible of pity only, I am sure you would be beside me, seeking to pour into my heart the balm of tenderness and consolation.

Thursday, after post time.

Well! I have had no letter, and that surprises me less than it grieves me.

You have seen the chevalier and he will have given you news of me. I was not well the day he came. I am better now, but yesterday I received a violent shock. I had a conversation, I heard *the details,* I saw his hand-writing once

more, and I read words which I ought not to survive. Ah! my blood, my life would be a poor price to pay for such feelings as his; see, therefore, how I must judge of yours.

The Abbé Morellet told me a few days ago, in the innocence of his heart, that you were in love with the young Comtesse de Boufflers; that you were really much occupied with her; that you had the strongest desire to please her, etc., etc. If it is not all true, it is so probable that it seems to me I ought to complain only that you did not take me into your confidence. To acquit you towards me I ask of you only one thing, and that is, to tell me the truth. Believe that there is no truth, none, that I cannot bear. I may seem to you feeble, enough so to make you think you ought to spare me, but it is not so. On the contrary, never did I feel more strength. I have the strength of suffering, and I can fear nothing more in this world, not even the harm you think yourself obliged to do me. Adieu.

July 6, 1774.

How little I see of you, how badly I saw you to-day, and how painful it is to me not to know where you are at this moment! I hope at Ris, and that you will return by to-morrow evening. They say the Comte de Broglie is expected here to-morrow morning. It is singular that I should be led to concern myself about his return, and to desire it may be earlier than his friends themselves desire. *Mon Dieu!* how a sentiment, a feeling changes and upsets all! That "I" of which Fénelon speaks is a myth. I feel in a positive manner that I am not *I*, I am *you;* and in order to be you, I have no sacrifice to make. Your interests, your affections, your happiness, your pleasures, — in them, *mon ami,* is the *I* that is dear to me, that is within me; all else is external and foreign to me; you alone in the universe can hold and occupy my

being. My thought, my soul can henceforth be filled by you alone, and by my harrowing regrets.

No, it is not when I compare you with myself that I fear, that I grieve lest I be not loved. Alas! it is when I think of what I was, and of him by whom I was — but to that unspeakable happiness I had no claim, and you see now that I did not deserve it. Oh! how my soul suffers, how painful these memories are! *Mon ami*, what will become of me when I see you no more, when I await you no more? Do you believe that I could live? the thought kills me.

But tell me why I need no courage to die, and yet have not the strength to say to myself that a day will come, a moment, when you will speak to me a word that will make me shudder. *Mon ami*, never speak it; it brings evil; that dreadful word will be my doom; if I hear it, I die.

How can you praise me for loving you? Ah! the merit, the virtue would have been in resisting the inclination, the attraction that drew me to you. But how could I fear, how foresee when guarded by a sentiment, by a grief, and by the inestimable blessing of being loved by a perfect being? *Mon ami*, it was this that surrounded my soul, this that defended it when you brought into it the turmoil of remorse and the heat of passion; and you praise me for loving you! Ah! it was a crime; and the excess of it does not justify me. But I shall horrify you; I am like Pyrrhus, and I "yield to the crime as a criminal."

Yes, to love you, or cease to live — I know but that one virtue and law of nature; and the feeling is so true, so involuntary, and so strong, that, in truth, you owe me nothing. Ah! how far I am from exacting, from claiming! *Mon ami*, be happy; find pleasure in being loved, and I acquit you. — I am beside myself, I cannot speak to you of what I feel; I want to tell you that I have seen the chevalier. He

asked news of you; he asked if I were satisfied with you; how kind of him! he wants all my friends to love me as well as he does; could you do that? He came yesterday and returned this evening.

So we shall go to Auteuil Thursday; be punctual to the rendezvous at my house from midday to half-past twelve. Come, *mon ami*, come. Be kind, be generous, and give me all the moments that are not employed in your pleasures and your affairs; I wish, I ought, to come after those.

1774.

I have four letters to answer; I have tried to write, but it is impossible. My mind is occupied with you. I do not know if I love you, but I feel, only too much, that you trouble, you agitate my soul in a painful and sorrowful way when I do not see you, or am not buoyed up by the pleasure and activity of expecting you. *Mon ami*, in the days when people believed in witchcraft I should have explained all that you have made me experience by saying that you had the power to throw a spell upon me which lifts me out of myself. But if that were so, if you had that power, how cruel I should think you for not prolonging the illusion which makes me fancy, at least for a few moments, that life could be a blessing. Yes, a blessing! I owe it to you that I have tasted that pleasure which intoxicates the soul to the point of taking all feelings of pain and sorrow from it.

But ought I to render thanks to you for that? the charm ceases the moment that you leave me; I find myself again overwhelmed by regret and remorse; the loss that I have met with rends me. All that I have read is feeble and cold in comparison with the love of M. de Mora; it filled his whole life; you can judge, therefore, how it filled mine.

Regret for such a love would suffice to make the sorrow and the despair of a tender soul. Ah! but I suffer more cruelly still from the remorse that weighs upon my soul; I see myself guilty, I feel myself unworthy of the happiness I once enjoyed: I failed a man, the most virtuous, the most tender of men; in a word, I failed my own self, I lost my own esteem; judge, therefore, if I ought to claim yours; and if you do not esteem me is there any means of blinding me to the point of believing that you can love me?

After this knowledge of myself and the reflections it brings with it, do you think there can ever be a creature more unhappy! Ah! *mon ami*, that mobility of soul for which you blame me, and which I admit, serves me only when I see you. It is that which has brought my life to a single point: I live in you, and by you; but, besides that, do you know what that mobility does for me? It makes me experience in one hour all the classes of torture which can rend and cast down the soul. Yes, that is true: I feel sometimes the torpor, the despondency of death, and at the same moment the violent convulsions of despair. This mobility is a secret of nature which makes one live with greater force in a single day than the majority of men would feel in a lifetime of a hundred years. It is true that this same mobility, which is only one curse the more to sorrow, is sometimes the source of much pleasure to a calm disposition; it is even, perhaps, a means of being agreeable, because it is one way of making vanity enjoy itself and of flattering self-love. I have felt a hundred times that I pleased by the impression I received of the charms and wit of the persons with whom I was; and, in general, I am loved because others believe and see that they are making an effect on me; and not because of the effect I make on them. That proves both the insufficiency of my mind and the activity of my

soul, and in these observations there is neither vanity nor modesty — but truth.

Mon ami, I would like to tell you the secret of my heart as to the slight impression you say you made upon me with the idea of a separation for four months. Here is what I promised myself: to yield wholly to my grief and to the invincible distaste that I feel for life. I believed that when my soul floated no longer between the hope and the pleasure of seeing you, of having seen you, it would have more strength than it needed to deliver me from a life that can offer me henceforth nothing but regrets and remorse. That, I swear to you, is the thought that has filled my mind for the last two months; and this deep and active need to be delivered from my troubles has sustained me and protects me still against the grief that your absence would make me feel.

Do not conclude from this that I love you with much passion: no, *mon ami;* it proves only that I cling ardently to my pleasure, and that this gives me the strength to suffer. I have already told you that two sayings are graven on my heart, and they pronounce my sentence: *to love you, to see you,* or *to cease to exist.* After that, say all the harm you will of my sensibility; never have I sought to combat your ill opinion of me; I have not thought you severe or unjust. You alone in the world have the right to disesteem me and to doubt the force and truth of the passion that inspired me during five years for him who loved me.

Four o'clock, 1774.

I left you last night because I thought I wearied you with talking so long of myself; but listen to me now, because it is of you that I wish to speak; but first and above all, believe, I entreat you, that I am not seeking to re-

Mlle. de Courcelles
(Mme. de Guibert)

proach you; I do not think I have the right to do so, and I should be grieved to displease you. The interest that I bear you makes me suffer from a thousand things that are of no account to you; one must love, to be aware of the harm one does to those who love us; the mind alone does not give the delicacy with which one ought to treat a sick and unhappy soul. But exordiums are wearisome; let us come to the fact.

Mon ami, you wish to keep the object of your journey a secret from me; if it is a good object why do you fear to tell it to me? And if this journey will shock my heart, why make it? If you do not owe your love to me, you owe it to yourself to be honourable and not deceive me. Never do you give me an unreserved confidence; what you say to me seems to escape you, and as if you hardly consented to let it do so. You started yesterday, and you did not tell me where you were going; I do not now know where you are; I am completely ignorant of you, and of your actions.[1] *Mon ami*, is that the behaviour of even the commonest friendship? And do you believe that I can think without pain, that of your own free will you will be twelve days without hearing of me? Do you suppose that I was not distressed when, knowing you were about to leave me, you would not give me your last evening in Paris? If you loved me you would have seen the hurt you gave me when you told me, Saturday evening, that the next day you should spend with Mme. d'Archambal. I did not find a word to say in reply, but I suffered.

[1] M. de Guibert had gone to the country-seat of the father of the young lady he thought of marrying. The name of the place was Courcelles, near Gien, and the name of the lady, who soon after became the Comtesse de Guibert, was Alexandrine-Louise Boutinon des Hays de Courcelles. Her portrait by Greuze is celebrated, and has been in various Exhibitions. — Fr. Ed.

Eleven o'clock at night, 1774.

I have no news of you; I hoped for none, and yet I awaited some. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how can you say that pain is no longer in my soul? I fainted from it yesterday; I had a crisis of despair which gave me convulsions that lasted four hours. *Mon ami*, if I must tell you what I believe, what is true, it is that I love you to madness, to the point of believing that I never loved better, but — I have need of your presence to love you; all the rest of my life is spent in remembering, in regretting, in weeping.

Yes, go: tell me that you love another; I desire it, I wish it; I have a wound so deep, so lacerating, that I can hope for no relief but that of death. The relief that you have given me is like the effect of opium; it suspends my sorrow, but does not cure it; on the contrary, I am feebler and more sensitive in consequence. You are right, I am no longer capable of love; I can only suffer. I did find hope in you, and I gave myself up to it; I thought that the pleasure of loving you would calm my sorrow. Alas! in vain do I flee it; it recalls me incessantly; it compels me; it leaves me but one resource. Ah! do not speak to me of that which I find in society; society has become to me an intolerable restraint; and if I could induce M. d'Alembert not to live with me, my door would be closed. How can you suppose that the productions of the mind would have more empire over me than the charm, the consolation of friendship? I have the most worthy friends, the most feeling, the most virtuous. Each, in his own way and according to his own tone, would fain reach my soul; I am filled with a sense of so much kindness but — I remain unhappy: you alone, *mon ami*, have the power to make me know happiness. Alas! it holds me to life while invoking death!

But why have you set such value on being loved by me?

You had no need of it; you knew well that you could not return it. Have you played with my despair? Either fill my soul, or torture it no longer; act so that I may love you always, or that I may never love you; in short, do the impossible, — calm me, or I die.

At this moment what are you doing? You are bringing trouble into a soul that time was calming; you abandon me to my sorrow. Ah! if you had feeling, you would be to be pitied, *mon ami*, you would know remorse. But at least, if your heart cannot fix itself, devote yourself to your talent, occupy yourself, work to some purpose; for if you continue this desultory, restless life, I fear you will some day be reduced to say, —

"The desire for fame has worn out my soul."

Saturday, in the evening.

It was not until this morning that I received news of you, and I do not know whence or how it came; certainly not by the post. Believe me crazy if you choose, think me unjust, in short, what you please; but it will not prevent me from telling you that I think I never in my life received so sharp, so blasting an impression as that your letter made upon me. I felt crushed by having ever given to any one the right to say to me what I was reading; and to say it with such ease and so naturally that I must conclude the writer was simply pouring out his soul in speaking to me, without one thought that he insulted me. Oh! how well you have avenged M. de Mora! How cruelly you punish me for the delirium, the distraction that dragged me towards you! How I detest them!

I will enter into no details; you have neither enough kindness nor enough feeling to allow my soul to lower itself to complaint; my heart, my self-love, all that inspires me,

all that makes me feel, think, breathe, in a word, all that is I, is shocked, wounded, and offended forever. You have restored to me enough strength, not to endure my sorrow (it seems to me greater and more crushing than ever), but to secure myself from ever again being tortured and made unhappy by you. Judge of the excess of my crime and the greatness of my loss. I feel, sorrow does not deceive me, that if M. de Mora were living and could have read your letter he would forgive me, he would console me, and hate you.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* leave me my regrets; they are a thousand times more dear to me than what you call your sentiment; that is dreadful to me; its expression is contemptuous, and my soul repels it with such horror that that alone assures me my soul is worthy of virtue. Were you even to think that you have done justly by me, I prefer to leave you in that opinion rather than enter upon any explanation. The matter is ended; be with me as you can, as you please; for myself, in future (if there is a future for me) I shall be with you as I ought always to have been, and, if you leave no remorse within my soul, I hope to forget you. I feel that the wounds of self-love chill the soul. I do not know why I have let you read what I wrote you before I received your letter; you will see there all my weakness; but you will not see all my misfortune: I hoped nothing more from you; I did not seek to be consoled. Then why should I complain? Ah, why! because the patient doomed to death continues to expect his doctor; because he lifts his eyes to his, still seeking hope; because the last impulse of pain is a moan, the last accent of the soul is a cry: that is the explanation of my inconsistency, my folly, my weakness. Oh! I am punished!

Eleven o'clock, 1774.

Have the delicacy to cease persecuting me. I have but one wish, I have but one need: it is not to see you again in private. I can do nothing for your happiness, I know nothing with which to console you: leave me therefore, and do not any longer take pleasure in torturing my life. I make you no reproaches; you suffer, I pity you, and I shall not speak to you again of my sorrows. But in the name of that which still has some empire over your soul, in the name of honour, in the name of virtue, leave me, and count no longer upon me. If I can calm myself, I shall live; but if you continue to act as you do, you will soon reduce me to the strength of despair: spare me the grief and the embarrassment of ordering my door to be closed to you during the hours when I am alone. I request you, and for the last time, not to come to me except between five o'clock and nine.

If Mme. de . . . could read my soul, I assure you she would not hate me; at the most, I have put a few regrets into hers: but you and she have made me feel the tortures of the damned, repentance, hatred, jealousy, remorse, contempt of myself, and sometimes of you — in short, all the misery of passion, but never that which makes the happiness of an honourable and sensitive soul. This is what I owe to you: but I forgive you. If I clung to life I should not be so generous; I should vow to you an implacable hatred. But soon I shall no more cling to you than I do to life, and I wish to employ my soul, my sensibility, all that remains to me of existence in loving, adoring the only being who ever truly filled my soul, and to whom I owe more happiness and pleasure than almost any one who ever walked this earth has felt or could imagine — and it is *you* who made me guilty towards that man! that thought sickens my soul; I turn away from it. I wish to calm myself, and,

if I can, to die. I repeat to you, and it is the last cry of my soul to you: in pity, leave me; if not, you will know remorse.

1774.

Mon Dieu! how you trouble my life! you make me pass through in one day the most contrary conditions; sometimes I am carried away by passionate emotion; then I turn to ice at the thought that you will not respond to me. Then this last reflection makes me angry with my own nature, and to recover a little calmness, I abandon myself to the heart-rending memory of him whom I have lost. Presently my soul is filled with gentler feeling; I am in a state to dwell on the few moments of happiness that I have tasted in loving. All these thoughts, which ought to take me farther from you, bring me closer. I feel that I love you, and so much that I can have no hope of repose except in death. That is my only support, the only help that I expect, the need of which I feel in almost all the moments of my life.

Mon ami, you have shed a balm on the little wound I gave myself last night; this proves the truth of what M. d'Alembert asserts, that there are circumstances in which pain is not pain. Yes, you shall have the Eulogy before midnight. I have sent to the Archbishop of Toulouse [Loménie de Brienne] to return it. Adieu, once more, *mon ami;* you cause my silence, my sadness, my unhappiness; in a word, it is you who give life to my soul, and my soul drags me onward. I dare not tell you to what point I love you.

Ten o'clock, 1774.

You do not care to see me again to-day; you are sufficiently indifferent to me, so that I need not fear to disturb the interests that are agitating you. Listen to me, and let us make a compact with each other, such as Mme. de Montespan proposed

to Mme. de Maintenon. Being forced to take a rather long journey with her tête à tête, "Madame," she said, "let us forget our hatred, our quarrels, and be good company to one another." Well! I say to you: "Let us forget our mutual displeasure, and do you be docile enough to bring back to me what I asked you for." Yes, it is I who am speaking to you, and I am not mad; at any rate, my madness is of a kind less harsh and more unhappy.

August 25, 1774.

Yes, *mon ami*, that which has most force, most power in nature, is assuredly passion; it has just imposed upon me privation, and it enables me to bear it with a thousand-fold more courage than reason or virtue could inspire. But passion is an absolute tyrant; a tyrant that makes slaves of those only who hate and treasure, by turns, their chain, and never have strength to break it. It commands me to-day to pursue a conduct absolutely the contrary to that I have prescribed to myself for the last two weeks. I see my own inconsistency; I am ashamed of it, but I yield to the need of my heart. I find a sweetness in being weak, and though you may abuse it, *mon ami*, I will love you, and will say it to you sometimes with pleasure, oftener with pain when I think you will not respond to it.

Listen to all I have suffered since you left me. An hour after your departure, I learned that you had hidden from me that Mme. de . . . had started the night before. Then I believed you had delayed your departure on her account. I judged you with a passion the true character of which is never to see things as they are. I saw and believed all that could distress me most: — I was deceived; you were guilty, you had come to bid me adieu in the very act of abusing my tenderness. That thought roused my soul to indignation, it irritated my self-love; I felt myself at the summit of un-

happiness; I could love you no longer; I abhorred the moments of pleasure and consolation which I owed to you. You had snatched me from death, the sole resource, the sole support which I had promised myself when I trembled for the life of M. de Mora. You made me survive that dreadful moment; you filled my soul with remorse, and you made me experience a greater misfortune still — that of hating you; yes, *mon ami*, hating you. For eight days I was filled by that horrible sentiment, although during that time I received your letter from Chartres. The need of knowing how you were in health made me break a resolution I had formed to open no more of your letters. You told me that you were well; you informed me that, in spite of my request, you had taken some of my letters, and you quoted a verse from "Zaïre," which seemed to sneer at my unhappiness; and then — what hurt me most of all — the regrets expressed in the letter seemed vague, and more fitted to relieve your soul than to touch mine. In a word, I made poison of all you said to me, and more than ever I resolved not to love you, and to open no more of your letters. I kept that resolution, which rent my heart and made me ill. Since your departure I am changed and shrunken as if I had had a great illness. Ah! this fever of the soul, which rises to delirium, is indeed a cruel illness; there is no bodily frame robust enough to bear such suffering. *Mon ami*, pity me; you have done me harm.

I received your letter from Rochambeau only on Saturday. I did not open it, and as I put it away in my portfolio, my heart beat violently: but I commanded myself to be strong, and I was. Ah! how much it cost me to keep that letter unopened! how many times I read the address! how often I held it in my hands! at night, even, I felt the need of touching it. In the excess of my weakness I told myself I was

strong, that I resisted my greatest pleasure, and — see my sort of madness! — I loved you then more actively than ever. Nothing, for six days, could distract my mind from that sealed letter; if I had opened it the moment I received it, its impression could not have been so sharp nor so profound. At last, at last, yesterday, receiving no letters from Chanteloup, from which place you had promised to write to me, I was struck with the thought that you might be ill at Rochambeau, and, without knowing what I was doing, nor to what I yielded, your letter was read, re-read, wetted with my tears, before I thought that I was not to read it. Ah! *mon ami*, how much I might have lost! I adore your sensibility.

What you tell me of Bordeaux opened a wound that is not yet closed, and never will be.[1] No, my life will not be long enough to mourn and cherish the memory of the most sensitive, most virtuous man who ever existed. What an awful thought! I troubled his last days. Fearing to have to complain of me he exposed his life to come to me, and his last impulse was an action of tenderness and passion. I do not know if I shall ever recover strength to read again his last words. If I had not loved you, *mon ami*, they would have killed me. I shudder still; I see them; and it is you who made me guilty; it is you who made me live; it is you who brought trouble into my soul; it is you that I love, that I hate, you who rend and charm a heart that is wholly *yours*. *Mon ami*, do not fear to be sad with me; that is my tone; sadness is my existence; you alone — yes, you alone have the power to change my disposition; your presence leaves me neither memories nor pain. I have experienced that you can divert even my physical sufferings. I love you, and all my faculties are employed and spell-bound when I see you.

[1] M. de Mora died at Bordeaux. — Tr.

Friday morning, August 26, 1774.

Mon ami. I was interrupted yesterday. There is so much news, so much going and coming, such joy, that one hardly knows whom to listen to. I should like to be glad, but that is impossible. A few months ago I should have been transported at both the good to be hoped and the evil from which we are delivered; at the present moment I am glad only by thought, and by reflection of the tone of all I see and all I hear. You know that M. Turgot is made controller-general [in place of the Abbé Terrai], — he enters the Council; M. d'Angevilliers has the department of buildings; M. de Miromesnil is Keeper of the Seals; the chancellor is exiled to Normandy; M. de Sartine has the navy, but they say it is only while awaiting the department of M. de la Vrillière; M. Lenoir is lieutenant of police; M. de Fitz-James does not go to Bretagne; it is the Duc de Penthièvre who is to hold the State Assembly with M. de Fourgueux — But I am really as piquante as M. Marin, from whom they have taken the Gazette to give it to an Abbé Aumont, because he told old news. Not to return to this matter I must add that the Baron de Breteuil goes to Vienna, and M. de la Vauguyon to Naples.

Now let us pass to social news. Yesterday M. d'Alembert had the greatest success at the Academy. I was not a witness of it, being too ill; I had only strength to sit in my usual chair. He read his Eulogy on Despréaux [Boileau] and some anecdotes about Fénelon, which they say were delightful. I would not listen to them this week, having my head full of that letter I did not open. One needs calmness to listen; consequently, I listen very little. *Mon ami,* they are printing a life of Catinat: the author is a M. Turpin, who did the "Life of the Great Condé." M. d'Alembert has read it, and from what he says I judge it will take neither

the piquancy nor the merit from your "Eulogy of Catinat;" as soon as it appears I will send it to you.

I have seen a great deal of Mme. de Boufflers since your departure, and I shall either humble or exalt your vanity by telling you that she never once named you. If that is natural, it is very cold; if there is a plan, it is very warm. We spent an evening with her, we went to the fair together, she came to see me, and we are all going to the catafalque. But for my benefit alone are some excellent pine-apples which she has sent me, and a letter of four pages on public affairs, on the glory with which the Prince de Conti has covered himself, and on her step-daughter, — not to speak of very flattering praises for me. I shall make you die of jealousy some day when I read it to you; but before then you will coquet and please and fascinate so many that my successes will seem nothing. But, *mon ami*, why did you not write me from Chanteloup?[1] have you already nothing to say to me? The post leaves every day, and if it did not, what matter? the letter would be in the post, and you need not be a century deprived of the pleasure of talking with one who loves you: remark that I dare not say "one whom you love." If you arrive Tuesday after the courier from Bordeaux, I shall have to wait till Wednesday, and that is holding me in purgatory after keeping me for fifteen days in hell.

If you receive this letter in Bordeaux, as I do not doubt you will, I retract and will ask you to go and see that consul: perhaps I shall thus obtain more details. He will tell you of the most lovable, most interesting of beings, whom I ought to have loved solely, whom I should never have injured if, by a fatality I detest, I had not been unable to escape a

[1] Where M. de Guibert often went, as was then the fashion, to visit the Duc de Choiseul in his popular exile to his country-seat of that name.— Fr. Ed.

new form of evil — for there is little that I have not experienced. Some day, *mon ami*, I will tell you things that are not to be found in the novels of Prévost or Richardson. My history is made up of fatal circumstances which prove to me that the true is often the most unlikely. The heroines of novels have little to say about their education; mine deserves to be written down for its singularity. Some evening, next winter, when we are very sad and inclined to reflection, I will give you the pastime of listening to a written paper which would interest you if you found it in a book, though it will inspire you with a great horror of the human species. Ah! how cruel mankind are! tigers are kind compared with them. I ought naturally to devote myself to hating; I have ill-fulfilled my destiny; I have loved much and hated little. *Mon Dieu! mon ami*, I am a hundred years old; this life of mine which looks to be so uniform, so monotonous, has been a prey to all misfortunes, exposed to all the villanous passions which stir the unworthy — but where am I wandering? wholly given to you whom I love, who sustain and defend my life, why do I cast my eyes on objects which made me detest it?

Saturday, August 27, 1774.

Mon ami, I have no news of you. I said to myself a hundred times: "He must have arrived very late; he would not think of the value of a single hour to me." That makes a difference of four days; I am now postponed till Wednesday! Well! the pains I have taken not to let my soul rest on that hope have served for nothing. The courier has arrived; I received three letters; but I could not read them because yours was missing. *Mon Dieu!* you are neither happy enough nor unhappy enough to experience that feeling. *Mon ami*, if I do not hear from you next Wednesday,

I will not write to you again. You have done me one wrong, but if you do me a thousand more, I here declare to you that I will not forgive you, and that I shall not love you less. You see that I am talking to you of the impossible: the logic of the heart is absurd. In God's name, act so that I shall never reason more wisely.

How much you are missed at this moment! the excitement is general, *mon ami*. There is this difference between my state of mind and that of all the persons I see: they are transported with joy at the happiness they foretell, while I only breathe the freer for our deliverance from evil. *Mon Dieu!* my soul cannot rise to joy; it is filled with regrets and heart-breaking memories; it is stirred by a sentiment that troubles it; that often gives it violent emotions, but very rarely any pleasure. In such a state, public joy is only felt by thought and reflection; reasonable pleasures are so moderate! my friends are displeased that they cannot drag me into enthusiasm. "I am very sorry," I say to them, "but I have no longer the strength to be glad." Nevertheless, I am very pleased that M. Turgot has already dismissed a scoundrel, the man of the wheat affair [treasurer of the king's granaries]. I must tell you of a compliment the fish-women paid to the king [Louis XVI.] on his fête-day: "Sire, we have come to compliment Your Majesty on the *hunt* you had yesterday; never did your grandfather have a better." The Comte de C . . . , who is at Martigny with M. de Trudaine, has written me three pages full of enthusiasm and transport. How happy they are! hope keeps them young. Alas! how old one feels when one has lost it, when nothing remains but to escape despair!

Tell me if you are writing many verses; if you are getting a habit of *making haste slowly*, if you have resolved to do like Racine, who wrote poetry reluctantly. *Mon ami*, I impose

upon you the pleasure of reading, and re-reading every morning a scene of that divine music; then you must walk about, and then compose verses, and with the talent that nature has given you to think and feel strongly, I will answer for it that you will make very noble ones. But what am I doing? Advising a man who has a great contempt for my taste, who thinks me a fool, who has never seen me sensible about anything, and who, judging me thus, may perhaps be sensible himself and show as much accuracy as justice. Adieu, *mon ami*. If you loved me I should not be so modest; I should feel I had nothing in all nature to envy.

I wrote you a volume yesterday to Bordeaux. That name is dreadful to me; it touches the sensitive and painful nerve of my soul. Adieu, adieu.

Monday, August 29, 1774.

You know that M. Turgot is controller-general, but what you do not know is the conversation he had with the king on the subject. He had shown some reluctance to accept the office when M. de Maurepas offered it to him on behalf of His Majesty. The king said to him, "So you do not wish to be controller-general?" "Sire," replied M. Turgot, "I must admit to Your Majesty that I should have preferred to keep the ministry of the navy, because it is a safer office and I could be more certain of doing well in it; but at such a moment as this it is not to the king I give myself, it is to the honest man." The king took both his hands, and said, "You shall not be mistaken." M. Turgot added: "Sire, I must represent to Y. M. the necessity of economy, of which Y. M. ought to set the first example; the Abbé Terrai has no doubt already said this to Your Majesty." "Yes," replied the king, "he has said it, but he has never said it in the way that you have." All this is just as if you had heard it, for M. Turgot never adds a word to the truth. This emo-

tion of the soul of the king gives great hope to M. Turgot, and I think that you will have as much as he. M. de Vaines is given the place of M. Leclerc [head-clerk of the Treasury]; but there will be no luxury, no show, no *valet de chambre*, no audience, in a word, the greatest simplicity, that is to say, the style of M. Turgot. Yes, I assure you, you are much missed here; you would have shared the transports of the universal joy. People begin to feel the need of silence to compose themselves and let them think of all the good they expect. The personal interests remain, which must always be counted for something.

The Chevalier d'Aguesseau has just gratified and shocked my heart at one and the same time; he knows that you were twenty-four hours at Chanteloup, that you are quite well, and that you reached Bordeaux on the 22d. After that, it was natural that your friends should hear from you on Saturday, 27th. I do not complain of the preference that you have given them; but, *mon ami*, it would be sweet to be able to congratulate myself and to thank you for an attention I should have felt so much and of which my soul had need. Adieu; here are three letters in a very short time. If I do not have one from you on Wednesday I believe that I shall be able to keep silence. All my friends ask news of you with interest, especially M. d'Alembert.

I think I have not told you of the success of the Chevalier de Chastellux in a trip of four days which he has just made to Villers-Cotterets [country-seat of the Duc d'Orléans]. He gave six readings there, though he had but four plays with him; he read two of them twice. He thinks that "Les Prétentions" was not much liked; I scolded the Archbishop of Toulouse, who was present, for this. If you knew how he justified himself you would die of laughing. The chevalier related his successes to me with much naïveté. I rejoiced;

but I am sorry to see him looking ill; I am afraid his health is seriously threatened. M. Watelet is quite ill with a chest affection; he is taking asses' milk. I am very poorly the last few days, but that is almost my habitual condition; the duration of my trouble takes from me even the consolation of complaining of it.

Adieu again. Did I not tell you that I had been to hear Millico sing? He is an Italian. Never, no never was the perfection of singing so united with sensibility and expression. What tears he made me shed! what trouble he brought into my soul! No singing ever left so deep, so sensitive, so heart-breaking an impression; I could have listened to him till it killed me. Oh! how preferable such a death to life!

Thursday, September 5, 1774.

Perhaps you will never read what I am going to write; perhaps, however, you will receive it immediately. The letter that I expect Saturday will, I think, decide whether to burn what I now write, or send it to you.

Listen to me: it seems to me that all the passions of my soul are calmed; it has returned, it is restored to its first, its only object. Yes, *mon ami*, I do not deceive myself; my memories, my regrets even, are dearer, closer, more sacred to me than the violent sentiment I have had for you and the passionate desire I have had to see you share it. I have gathered myself together; I have re-entered myself; I have judged myself, and you also; but I have pronounced judgment on myself only; I have seen that I was seeking the impossible, namely: that you should love me.

By an unspeakable good fortune, which seldom happens, the most tender, the most perfect, the most charming being who ever existed gave me, abandoned to me his soul, his thought, and all his existence. However unworthy I was

of his choice and of the gift he made me, I rejoiced in it, with amazement and transport. When I spoke to him of the vast distance which nature had placed between us, I grieved his heart; and he soon persuaded me that all was equal between us because I loved him. No, never could beauty, charm, youth, virtue, merit be flattered and exalted to a higher degree than M. de Mora would fain have made my vanity enjoy; but he saw my soul; the passion that filled it cast me far indeed from the enjoyments of vanity. I tell you all this, *mon ami*, not from a weakness that would be too silly and too unworthy of the regrets which rend my heart, but to justify myself to you — yes, justify myself.

I have loved you with transport; but this cannot excuse in your eyes the wish I dared to form of seeing you share my feeling; that pretension must have seemed to you madness! I, to fix a man of your age, who joins to all agreeable qualities the talents and the wit which must make him an object of preference to all the women who have the most right to please, fascinate, and attach! *Mon ami*, I am filled with confusion in thinking to what a point you must have thought my vanity blind and my reason astray. Yes, I blame myself sorrowfully: the liking you inspired in me, the remorse which tortured me, the passion felt for me by M. de Mora, all that combined has led me into an error I abhor, — for I must confess to you that my thoughts went farther still; I was convinced that you might love me, and that conviction, so foolish, so self-conceited, dragged me into the abyss.

No doubt it is late, too late, to tell myself of my mistake. I detest it, and in despising myself I have tried to hate you; in fact, you have excited in me that horrible emotion; I have even written to you to that effect; it was the last

result, the last effect of the passion which agitated me. I am far from making for myself a merit of the calmness to which I have returned; it is, in fact, another blessing from the man I adored. I will not explain to you all that has passed within me during the last fifteen days; sufficient to say that I know myself no longer: the thought of you no longer fills my mind, and if remorse were not beside my grief, I believe the thought of you would be very far away from me. Not that I could ever cease to feel a friendship for you, and an interest in your happiness; but this will be a tempered feeling, which may, if you respond to it, give me many moments of sweetness without ever troubling or torturing my soul. Oh! with what horrors it has been filled! It seems to me miraculous that I have not succumbed to the despair to which I have been brought. But this shock by depressing my body has given tone to my soul: it remains tender, but it feels no passion. No longer do I feel hatred, or vengeance, or — Ah, *mon Dieu!* what word was I about to utter? one that was no more allied to my thought than to the memory of M. de Mora. I still owe to him all that my heart can feel that is most consoling, most tender, regrets and tears. All the details that you have sent me have been bathed in my tears. I thank you for them; I owe to you a sensation which I prefer to all pleasure that does not come from my thoughts of M. de Mora.

I have read and re-read your letters, that from Bordeaux, and that of the 8th from Montauban. I pity you sincerely for being so agitated and tormented without any absolute reason for it; but vague troubles are fugitive, at least I hope so, for I desire your peace and happiness with all my soul. I cannot trouble either the one or the other, though your delicacy may make you suffer for the harm you have done me. I forgive it from the bottom of my heart; forget it,

never speak to me about it, and leave me to believe that you think me more unhappy than culpable. You are not obliged to believe me, and I have lost the right of convincing you; but I shall still venture to say with Jean-Jacques, "My soul was never made for degradation." The strongest passion, the purest, inspired it too long; he who was the object of that passion was too virtuous; his soul was too great, too lofty to let him desire to reign in mine, if mine had been abject and contemptible. His prepossession, his passion for me raised me to his level. *Mon Dieu!* how I have fallen! how sunken I am! but he never knew it. My misery is dreadful; he would have shared it. He died for me. I should have made him live unhappy. Oh, my friend! if in the region of the dead you still can hear me, be tender to my sorrow, my repentance. I have been guilty, I have wronged you, but my despair, has it not expiated my crime? I have lost you: I live, yes, I live; is not that being punished enough?

Forgive me the impulse that has led me to him whom I fain would follow. Adieu. If I receive a letter from you on Saturday I will add a few words; but I forgive you in advance for whatever you may say that is offensive to me; and I retract, with the strength and reason that remain to me, all that I have written in the convulsions of despair. It is now that I place in your hands my true profession of faith; I promise and pledge myself to exact no more and expect no more from you. If you preserve to me your friendship I shall enjoy it with peace and gratitude; if you do not think me worthy of it I shall grieve, but I shall not consider you unjust. Adieu, *mon ami;* it is friendship that now employs that word; it is the dearer to my heart now that it can no longer trouble it.

Saturday, eleven o'clock at night.

Here is your answer: it is such as I could have wished, cold and restrained. *Mon ami,* we shall now understand each other; my soul is in the key of yours; my letter did not offend you; you have judged marvellously well; you have had over me the advantage of a reasonable man over an impassioned nature. You had coolness, I had frenzy, but it was the last paroxysm of a dreadful malady, of which one had better die than recover, because the violence of these fits of fever blasts and lays low the strength of the unhappy patient — but enough, too much, no doubt, on what you call my "injustice" and your "delicacy." *Mon ami,* do you know what *is* delicate? It would have been to suppress the six or seven pages you had written me before you received my letter.

What superiority reason has over passion! how it rules conduct! It brings and sheds peace on all; in a word, it is so decorous, so circumspect, that I ought to thank you to-day for what you have said and what you have not said to me. *Mon ami,* your Friday letter is amiable; it is gentle, obliging, reasonable; it has the tone and charm of confidence; but it is sad, and I am sorry if that is the disposition of your soul. I have not in me the wherewithal to rouse you; I have not even the strength to talk with you to-night. Adieu! you expect no further news of me, do you?

Monday evening, September 19, 1774.

I wish to write to you. I want to answer you; if I miss to-morrow's courier I must wait till Saturday; meanwhile my soul is dead. I have just re-read your letter; I thought it would revive me, but not so. . . . I feel an awful sterility within me, and if I were to let myself go this is how I should answer you: "All the reflections that you make on

your present situation are very reasonable; but if you concern yourself about the future you are even more sure to find subjects for hope than motives for fear. It seems to me that men of merit never had finer chances before them; with virtue, ideas, and talent they can pretend to anything. This is not the moment for discouragement; on the contrary, they should come forward now with confidence, not to seek favours, but to make themselves known and to get justice done to them."

With regard to the late complete upsetting in the domains [the matter of "farms" and farmers-general], I find it difficult to believe that M. Turgot will, in any respect, follow or execute the projects of the Abbé Terrai. If, however, the impossible happens, and he should choose to carry out that plan, M. de Vaines will be in the way of doing you service. He will do the impossible to oblige you; he has a particular attraction towards you; I never see him that he does not ask for news of you; the day of your departure I received a note from him in which were these words: "I entreat you to send me news of yourself and of M. de Guibert, who greatly interests those who love a frank and ardent soul that springs on all sides towards glory." I wanted to send you these words, and then I was deterred by an interest that does not allow of words. You ought to write to M. de Vaines; not on his good fortune, for it is just the reverse; he has sacrificed his own interests to his friendship for M. Turgot and his love for the public good; in a word, he was led away by his desire to assist in that good; he has had the activity of virtue; but now that a little calmness has returned he sees himself burdened with a sad labour.

I do not contend against your projects for the future, — it does not exist for me; from that you will rightly believe that I cannot rouse myself to foresee or fear for others. In gen-

eral, I think you would do best not to marry in the provinces. That would be a way, of course, to settle your uncertainties, but it would also be a misfortune to deprive yourself of the greatest blessing, which is hope. *Mon ami,* I cannot conceive why you have not strength enough to bear ill-fortune. Paris is the place in the world where one can be poor with the least privations; none but fools and tiresome people need to be rich. — You see now that it was folly to think you must make the tour of the world in order to write a good work. Begin it now; and before it is finished you may be rich enough to travel. In short, I want you to regard the lack of fortune as a contrariety, not a misfortune. *Mon ami,* if I looked down from the moon I should prefer your talent to the wealth of M. Beaujon; I should better like the love of study than the post of grand-equerry of France. In other words, being condemned to live, and not being able to choose the life of a worthy Normandy farmer, I should ask to have the mind and talent of M. de Guibert; but I should wish to be inspired to make more use of them.

What you tell me of the children of your sister is full of interest and feeling; but, *mon ami,* here you are again tormenting yourself about the future. They are well at present, those children; you see what they have lost, and that worries you. The future of the little boy is less embarrassing; you know better than I that the education of a provincial college is just as good and just as bad as that of a college in Paris; and then, *mon ami,* if he enters a regiment at sixteen it is all the same whether he has been brought up in Bordeaux or in Paris. What false ideas we have on the first interest of life — happiness! Ah! good God! is it in sharpening the mind, is it in widening ideas, that the happiness of individuals is made? — though both are useful in general. But why must your nephew be made happy in your way? — I feel

that I am replying very stiffly, very stupidly, to the details into which your friendship and confidence made you enter; but what can I do? Nothing comes to me; my soul is a desert, my head as empty as a lantern. All that I say, all that I hear, is utterly indifferent to me; I can say to-day, like the man who was blamed for not killing himself, since he was so detached from life, "I do not kill myself because it is all the same to me whether I live or die." That is not quite true with me, however, for I suffer, and death would be a relief; but I have no energy.

September 20, 1774. 6 o'clock in the morning.

To compensate for the flatness and dryness of my letter of last night, it occurs to me to send you two little folios of Voltaire and the "Eulogy on La Fontaine," which I have read with as much pleasure as I should have had in listening to them. Notice that I do not praise to exaggeration, therefore you are free to have your own opinion and to think detestable what I thought good. An edict is to be issued within a few days on the domestic commerce in grains; it will state its causes: that is a new system, and it seems to me it will certainly please the multitude; but knaves and partisans will still find something to criticise.

It was said yesterday that the archbishopric of Cambrai would be given to Cardinal de Bernis and that the Duc de La Rochefoucauld would go as ambassador to Rome. Perhaps the Abbé de Véry may be first appointed, but only to get him made a cardinal and prepare the way for M. de La Rochefoucauld; that was the talk of yesterday at my fireside, and if I were to name to you the persons present you would see that if that news does not become true, it was at least not absurd. The Chevalier de Chastellux, whom I often see, but always on the run, has no

time to ask me news of you; he is busier, more dissipated, more in the suite of all the princes than ever. To-day he is in the country; he will hear news of you there; with tact and knowledge of the ways of the world a man is always in the tone and thought of those he is with.

M. d'Alembert and all your friends speak to me often of you; they address themselves to me to hear about you; but it is I who must have recourse to them in future, must I not? Ah! *mon Dieu!* how crazy passions are! and how stupid! For the last fifteen days I feel the greatest horror at them. But I must also be just and admit that in adoring calmness and reason I scarcely exist; I have strength to feel only my utter annihilation: my body, my soul, my head, all *myself* is in a state of exhaustion; and that state is not very painful, although it is new to me.

Good-night, *mon ami;* for though it is morning I have not yet slept. No one, I think, has thought of writing about sleep, about its influence on the mind and on the passions. Those who study nature ought not to neglect that interesting part of the life of the unhappy. Alas! if they only knew how much the privation of sleep can add to other woes! In approaching those who suffer, those who are unhappy, the first question asked should be, "Do you sleep?" the second, "How old are you?"

Begun Thursday, September 22, 1774.

Mon ami, if I still had passion, your silence would kill me; and if I had only vanity it would wound me and I should hate you with all my strength. Well! I live, and I hate you no longer. But I shall not conceal that I see with grief, though without astonishment, that it was my impulsion that led you on — you were forced to answer me. You do not know what to say to me now, when you believe that my feeling has ceased; you feel no regret, and you

find nothing in you which gives you the right to reclaim what you have lost. Well, *mon ami*, I am sufficiently calm to be just; I approve of your conduct, though it grieves me; I esteem you for allowing nothing to take the place of truth. And, in fact, of what could you complain? I have relieved you; it is dreadful to be the object of a feeling we do not share; we suffer, and we make the other suffer: to love and to be loved is the happiness of heaven; when one has known it and lost it, what remains but to die?

There are two things in this life that do not admit of mediocrity — poesy and . . . But I do not deceive myself; the feeling that I had for you was not perfect. First, it caused me to blame myself, — it cost me remorse; and then — I know not if it was the trouble in my conscience that overthrew my soul and changed, absolutely, my manner of being and of loving — I was ceaselessly agitated by feelings I condemned; I felt jealousy, disquietude, distrust; I blamed you incessantly; I imposed a law upon myself to make no complaint; but that coercion was dreadful to me; in short, that way of loving was so foreign to my soul that it became a torture. *Mon ami*, I loved you too much, and not enough. Thus we have both gained by the change that has been wrought in me, and which was neither your work nor mine. I saw clear for a moment, and in less than half an hour I felt the end of pain, I became extinct, and then I resuscitated. What is inconceivable is that on coming to myself, I found only M. de Mora . . . the faintness that came upon my brain had obliterated the traces of all else. You, *mon ami*, who, fifteen minutes earlier filled all my thoughts, never once re-entered my mind for twenty-four hours; and then I saw that my sentiment was only a memory.

I remained thus several days without recovering the

strength to suffer or to love, until at last I regained the degree of reason which enables us to estimate all things at nearly their true value, and made me feel that, if I could hope for no pleasure, there was little misfortune left for me to fear. I have recovered calmness; but I do not deceive myself: it is the calm of death; and before long, if I live, I can say, like that man who lived alone for thirty years and had never read anything but Plutarch, when they asked him how he felt, "Almost as happy as if I were dead." *Mon ami*, that is my state of mind; nothing that I see, that I hear, nothing that I do or have to do, can rouse my soul to an emotion of interest; that manner of existing has hitherto been unknown to me. There is but one thing in the world that does me good; it is music: but it is a good which others would call pain. I long to hear a dozen times a day that air which rends me, and puts me in possession of all that I mourn: *J'ai perdu mon Eurydice . . .*

I go constantly to the "Orpheus and Eurydice" [Gluck's opera], and I am there alone. Last Tuesday I told my friends that I intended to pay visits, but I shut myself up in a box. On returning home that evening I found a note from the Comte de Crillon telling me that he had had a letter from you the evening before. I waited till the next day and fortunately found him at Mme. Geoffrin's. He read me your letter; you spoke of me, and did so three times; that was kind, but very much colder than if you had not named me at all. However, *mon ami*, I am content; it is just what I wish of you. *Mon Dieu!* why should I be hard to satisfy — I, who can no longer love except with a reasonableness and a moderation hitherto unknown to me?

I have seen M. Turgot and spoken to him about what you fear as to the domains. He told me that no course had been decided on as yet; that M. de Beaumont, intendant of

finances, was engaged on the matter, and that meanwhile the companies created by the Abbé Terrai were forbidden to act. M. Turgot added that as soon as he was informed by M. de Beaumont, he would tell me if anything was planned or decided in relation to the domains; but he could now say, in general, that the greatest respect would be shown to property. I did not stop there: I spoke of your affair to M. de Vaines, and he answered me clearly: "Tell him to be easy; the Abbé Terrai's project will never be carried out by M. Turgot; I answer for that." There, *mon ami*, are the answers of two men which ought to reassure you; though they are not alike, they mean, it seems to me, the same thing. I send you the verdict of which I have already told you; I add to it a letter from M. de Condorcet, which I think so good that I have had it copied. *Mon ami*, do not thank me for the pains I have taken to send you what pleases me: it is not done for your sake; it is to hear you spoken of; for I still retain much liking for your mind, which is excellent and very natural. Adieu.

Friday, September 23, 1774.

Mon ami, I make you a victim; I write to you so much that I oppress you. It is the only occupation that makes me believe I still live; and, though I think that to be quite dead is a better state, I find, while suffering, a certain sweetness in turning toward you. If you do not understand me you will hear me at any rate, and answer me, for it is very sad to have no letters from you. Here are two couriers missed, Monday and Wednesday, and it is I who have done myself that harm; for, without loving me, you would certainly have continued to write to me punctually. Ah! good God! to what excess I have been carried! I loved you and hated you with fury. It was only the last transport of a soul about to vanish forever — and in truth I have not felt it since; I do

not know what has become of it. I thought you would have written on Wednesday to M. d'Alembert; my first words on coming home that evening were to ask him if he had had a letter; he said he did not know — for he has the excellent habit of not opening his letters till the next morning. I soon knew that he had received none from you, and my suffering increased so much that I was obliged to take an anodyne, and then, by dint of reason and arguments, I came, not to care no longer, but, at least, to cease to torture myself.

You know that M. de Muy, minister of war, is to marry in a few days Mme. de Saint-Blancard, a German chanoinesse, whom you may have known during the late war. They say she is amiable, has been pretty, and loves M. de Muy. This marriage gives me a very good opinion of him; it is an excellent employment of his wealth. The Comte de Broglie is at Ruffec; is that very far from Montauban? I should be sorry to have you go there; he would agitate your mind and give you no help in bringing to good conclusion the projects of fortune he would put into your head. *Mon ami*, you should fix your thoughts, you ought to see much of M. de Muy. He must know you, and if he has intelligence he will seek the aid of your ideas and your talents. Above all, bring back with you your father; his presence will be useful to you, and besides, if his fortune is capable of amelioration he ought to show himself; no one seeks the merit that conceals itself.

I strongly applaud the horror you feel at provincial life; but the country is not provincial; I would rather live in a village among the peasantry than in a town like Montauban and the good company of that society. But, *mon Dieu!* in Paris how many provincial towns there are! how many fools! how many sham "importants." Good is so rare everywhere that I am not sure if it is not a great misfortune to have known it, and to have made it one's "daily bread."

We may say of the habit of living with persons of intellect and high merit what M. de La Rochefoucauld said of the Court: "It does not make us happy, but it prevents us from finding happiness elsewhere;" that is precisely what I feel now every time I find myself in society.

My friend, guess if you can — but I must tell you it is no happiness, no pleasure, not even a consolation to be loved, even deeply loved by any one who has very little mind. Ah! how I hate myself for not being able to love that which is excellent! how difficult to please I have grown! But is it my fault? see what an education I have received. Mme. du Deffand (because for intellect she must be cited) Président Hénault, the Abbé Bon, the Archbishop of Toulouse, the Archbishop of Aix, M. Turgot, M. d'Alembert, the Abbé de Boismont, M. de Mora, — those were the persons who taught me to think and speak, and who deigned to consider me as *something:* after that, how could I turn my thoughts to being loved by . . . ? But, *mon ami,* do you think people *can* love when they have little or no mind? I know very well that you think me crazy or imbecile; but what does that matter? I had it on my heart to say to you what I have just said. Good-night: I keep a little place in my letter to tell you to-morrow that I have no news from you. *Mon ami,* forgive me, but that seems impossible.

Saturday, after post time.

You are ill, you have fever! Ah! *mon ami,* it is not my interest that this news awakens; it is my terror — I think that I bring evil to all I love. Oh! *mon Dieu!* if I must fear again, if I must again feel the terrors and the despair that consumed two years of my life, why did you then prevent me from dying? You did not love me, but you chained me! If on Monday I do not hear from you . . .

Monday, September 26, 1774.

Mon ami, I desired all day yesterday to write to you, but strength failed me. I was in a state of suffering which has taken from me the power to speak and act. I cannot eat; the words *food* and *pain* are synonymous to me now. — But it is of you I wish to speak, it is with you that my mind is occupied, for *you* that I am anxious. I see you ill; I reproach myself for having caused you some moments of sadness; without flattering myself that you attach much interest either to my feelings or to me, I know that I have troubled your peace of mind, and I am greatly distressed. *Mon ami,* it is you who taught me to grieve and torture that which I love. Ah! I have been cruelly punished for it! and if heaven reserves for me . . . Ah! my blood freezes, I will sooner die. That thought is more dreadful than the most violent death could ever be. You say you wish never to wake, and it is to *me* that you confide your disgust of life. How different were the words that he wrote me when dying: "I was about to see you again, and I must die! what a dreadful fate! but you have loved me, and you fill me still with tender feeling. I die for you . . . "

Mon ami, I cannot transcribe those words without bursting into tears; the feeling that dictated them was the tenderest and most impassioned that ever was; misfortune, absence, illness, nothing could shake or chill that soul of fire. Ah! I thought to die yesterday on reading a letter from M. de Fuentès [M. de Mora's father]. He tells me that his sorrow has not allowed him as yet to look at anything that was dear to his son; that he will always preserve for me the warmest and tenderest gratitude for the proofs of affection which I have at all times given to M. de Mora; that I have supported him under his affliction, and that he would gladly return at the cost of his life all that his son owed to me.

He adds that he ventures in his name, the name of the son he mourns, to ask me for a favour, namely: to induce M. d'Alembert, who was once his friend, to write a funereal eulogy in honour of his son's memory, which would be the consolation of his few remaining years, and which he could read to his family as an honourable record and a source of encouragement in virtue to his other children. And this touching entreaty ends in tears. Ah! how many it made me shed. I do not fear to weary you with a narrative which would not be cold in a novel. *Mon Dieu!* I adore M. de Fuentès; he was worthy of having such a son. What a loss for him and for all who loved that son! and yet we live! His father, his sister, and I, we would have been too fortunate had we died at the moment he was taken from us. Ah! my friend, have pity for me! You alone in the world can bring some sentiments of comfort and consolation to a soul that is mortally wounded.

I feel that your presence would have lightened the load with which I am crushed; now that I see you no longer I am lost in the wilderness; my soul is driven to excesses, as you saw by the violence I put into my conduct to you. *Mon ami,* replace me in the right way. Be my guide, if you wish me to live. Do not abandon me. I dare not say to you, I love you; I know not if I do. Judge me in the trouble in which I live. You know me better than I know myself. I know not whether it is you or death that I implore: I have need of being succoured, of being delivered from the misery that is killing me. — *Mon ami,* if I do not have news from you to-day, or at least hear some, I know not how I can wait till Wednesday. *Mon Dieu!* can you conceive, can you attain to an idea of what I feel, of all I suffer? Could any one believe that I ever knew calmness? *Mon ami,* it is true that I lived for twenty-four hours apart from all thought of you; after

which I was many days in total apathy; I lived, but it seemed to me I was beside my own self. I remembered having had a soul that loved you; I saw it afar, but it inspired me no longer. Alas! if you are as indifferent as that "unfortunate being who loves nothing," you will not understand me; if this language does not go to your soul that soul is deadly cold; it will then be for me to pity you for the weariness I have caused you.

Good-bye; I will not close my letter until after the postman comes. *Mon ami*, do not take too much quinine; it injures the chest, and when one is cured too quickly of a fever, obstructions nearly always appear elsewhere; remember that you are not free to neglect your health; my peace, my life depend upon it. *Mon ami*, tell me if I love you; you ought to know — I, I know myself no longer; for example, at this moment I feel that I passionately long for news of you, but I feel also, in a most urgent manner that I *need* to die. I suffer from head to foot. My soul is uplifted and my body faints; from this lack of harmony misery results, and well-nigh madness — But I must stop. Adieu; would that I could go to meet the postman.

4 *o'clock*. The postman has arrived. M. d'Alembert has no letter, although the courier from Montauban comes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. *Mon ami*, I am very unhappy; either you are very ill, or you are very cruel to leave me in such anxiety. You know if my health, my condition, can bear this increase of trouble and pain. Ah! *mon Dieu!* what shall I do, what will become of me till Wednesday! I will send to the Chevalier d'Aguesseau.

Friday, in the evening, September 30, 1774.

Mon ami, you kept me from dying, yet you kill me by leaving me in a state of anxiety which convulses my soul.

I have no news of you; nor has the Chevalier d'Aguesseau; and he has been to all the persons who might, perhaps, have had some. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how little I knew myself! how mistaken I was when I told you that my soul was forever closed to happiness, to pleasure; that it could now know nothing but dull misery, and that I had no longer anything to fear. Alas! I cannot breathe since Wednesday. I see you ill; I have an inward terror that alarms me. What a dreadful state of things you are making me endure! — these Wednesdays, these Saturdays, horrible days which have made the hope and the despair of my life for two consecutive years!

But can you be ill enough to have forgotten that you are loved with passion; and if you have remembered it why have you failed to write to me? Surely you knew it was delivering my soul to mortal agony to thus make me fear for you. *Mon ami,* if you could have spared me what I suffer, you are very guilty; and it seems to me that such a wrong ought now to cure me. But oh! my God! are we free? Can I calm and chill myself according to my will, and according perhaps to yours? Ah! I can only love you and suffer; that is the emotion, the sentiment of my heart; I can neither stop it nor excite it, but I long to die. I have thoughts which are an active poison; but it is not rapid enough. If I hear to-morrow that you are ill, but receive no letter, I shall have lived too long. No, it is impossible, you have surely thought of me; I wait therefore, but in trembling and with an impatience never felt except by a soul as impassioned as it is unhappy. Ah! Diderot was right: none but the unhappy know how to love. But, *mon ami,* this will not soothe you if you suffer; and if you are calm you will not value it. Well! I love you, and I do not need *your* feeling for my heart to give itself, to abandon itself to you.

All that the Abbé Terrai did, or planned to do in the matter of the domains is null and void; all has been destroyed, rescinded, nullified; you may be as easy about your father's property as you were ten years ago. M. Turgot assured me of this yesterday; he asked me for news of you, and reproached himself for not having yet had a moment in which to answer persons to whom he could not bring himself to write office letters. M. de Vaines charged me to recall him to your recollection; he is absolutely crushed by his work; they have so much to repair and to foresee that they have not a moment in which to breathe. The Abbé Terrai is ordered to replace in the royal treasury the hundred thousand crowns he had taken by anticipation on the leasing of farms; M. Turgot has declared that he does not wish for the fifty thousand francs which come to him yearly, by law, from those leases; he has reduced himself in the same way on all sides, which gives him courage to make reforms of the same kind in the offices dependent on him. He is an excellent man; and if he can remain in office he will become the idol of the nation: he is fanatical for the public good, and he spends all his strength for it.

Saturday, after the postman.

I was interrupted. I have received your letter, *mon ami;* you are well; that is enough to live for. Alas! I know not how to answer you. The shocks that you give my soul are too violent for words. *Mon ami,* all that I can say to you is that your letter is charming through the tone of tenderness and confidence which reigns there; it is honourable and true as your own soul; and though it does not answer mine on all points, that is not your fault, and I do not complain of it. Alas, no! I am satisfied with you; but I say with Phèdre, "I have taken to life a hatred, and to my love a horror."

Oh! if you knew how I detest myself, and what reason I have to do so! Truth is in my heart, and I must ever reproach myself for usurping the esteem and the sentiments that are given to me. During this late time I fell into a state that alarmed my friends; they ascribed it to my sense of the loss that I have met with, and thus they honoured it; whereas, the alarm you caused me diverted my mind from those regrets that had hitherto rent my soul. So, though dying of grief, I am unworthy of the sentiments I inspire. Do you conceive the full horror of my situation? Do you believe that it is in human nature to bear it long? Where shall I find courage against such sorrow? Who will share it with me? Who can have compassion upon so much misery? Well! I say to my heart — and I feel it, I do not deceive myself — if M. de Mora could live again he would understand me, he would love me, and I should have no more remorse, no more suffering. Ah! that feeling ought to show you what I have lost! *Mon ami*, why have you not written to me by the last two couriers? Why do you not answer me and say, "I reply to your letter of such a date"? We ought to come to some agreement; a troubled head needs to be spared. *Mon ami*, consider me as one attacked by mortal illness; and give me the cares, the indulgence, we have for the dying; that will have no harmful consequences to your happiness. I bind myself by all that I hold most sacred, by the memory of M. de Mora, never to trouble you, to exact nothing from you; and after this letter of yours, which is such that my heart thanks you for it, you could never deceive me, I could never complain; and if I did show grief, you would be feeling enough to hear me without impatience.

Adieu, I do not answer your letter; in the confusion of my thoughts, in the trouble I am in, I feel but one thing: I

live and I have lost him who loved me. *Mon ami*, if it does not constrain you too much, write to me by every courier; I need it.

Monday, October 3, 1774.

Ah! *mon ami*, my soul is sick. I have no words, I have only cries. I have read, I have re-read, I shall read a hundred times your letter. Ah! my friend, what blessings and what evils united! what pleasure mingled with the cruellest bitterness! The reading of that letter increases and redoubles the agitations of my heart; I can no longer calm myself. You have charmed and rent my soul alternately; never did I find you more lovable, more worthy of being loved, and never have I been so penetrated with deep and poignant and bitter sorrow at the memory of M. de Mora. Yes, I fainted under it, my heart was oppressed, I wandered in my thoughts all night; so violent a state must surely annihilate me, or drive me mad. Alas! I fear neither: if I loved you less, if my regrets were less dear to me, with what delirious joy, with what transport would I deliver myself from the life that is crushing me! Ah! never, never did any creature survive such torture, such despair.

Mon ami, why do we make poison of the only good that is in Nature, the only good that men have not been able to spoil, nor yet corrupt? The whole world is estimated and paid by money; consideration, happiness, friendship, even virtue, are bought, paid, and rated at their weight in gold; there is but one thing high above opinion, one thing remaining spotless like the sun, which has its heat, which vivifies the soul, enlightens it, sustains it, makes it stronger, greater. Ah! *mon ami*, need I name that gift of Nature? But when it does not make the happiness of the soul it fills, we must die — oh, yes! die! I needed that, I yielded to it; but you were cruel! Ah! what have you done with the life you saved?

Filled it with trouble and tears! added to a frightful misfortune the torture of remorse! made me detest every instant of my life! and yet you have bound me to it by an interest that consumes my heart and which, twenty times a day, presents itself to my thoughts as a crime! Ah! *mon Dieu!* I am guilty, yet heaven is witness that nothing was dearer to my heart than virtue — and to say that it was not you who led me astray! What? you believe that it was I alone who cast myself into that abyss? I am not to impute to you either my faults or my misfortunes? Oh! I wanted to expiate them, I saw the termination of my woe; in hating you I became stronger than death. By what fatality, and *why* have I returned to you? Why did the fear of your illness thus enervate my soul? Why do you rend me and comfort me at the same moment? Why this fatal mixture of pleasure and pain, of balm and poison?

All this acts with too much violence on a soul that passion and misfortune have overwrought; all this is completing the destruction of a body exhausted by illness and loss of sleep. Alas! I said to you, in the extremity of my trouble, "I know not if it be you or death that I implore;" it is by you, or by death that I must be relieved, or cured forever — all the world, all Nature can do nothing for me.

Alas! does there remain to me one prayer, one desire, one regret, one thought of which you and M. de Mora are not the object? *Mon ami,* I thought my soul extinct; I told you this and I found sweetness in such repose. But ah, good God! how fugitive that feeling was! it was only the effect of opium prolonged. Well! I will recover my reason or I shall lose it wholly. But tell me, how is it possible that I have not yet spoken to you of yourself, that I have not said how I fear a return of your fever; and that I hope for news to-day as the post is not in? Adieu, *mon ami;* your

gentleness, your truth have filled my heart with tenderness and sensibility.

Monday evening.

I have a line from you and only a line; but it tells me that you are without fever, and thus it has tranquillized me. But you are anxious about your sister; and so am I, for I am so near to all that touches you. I, too, have fever: the paroxysm of suffering last night has affected my blood and my pulse; but do not be uneasy, death never comes so opportunely; the unhappy do not die, and they are too feeble, too cowardly, when they love, to kill themselves. I shall live, I shall suffer, I shall await — not happiness, not pleasure — what? *Mon ami*, it is to you I speak; answer me. . . .

Do you not think that your heedlessness is rather dangerous? You write to me and do not seal your letter; I send you its envelope that you may not doubt me. The Pope [1] is dead of an illness that arouses very frightful suspicions. Good-night, *mon ami*. My head is heavy and I feel more ill than usual, but I have had my letter from you: that is the one important thing. I am in a very singular condition; for the last twelve hours my eyes represent to me but one and always the same object, whether I keep them open or shut; that object, which is he whose memory I cherish and adore, fills me with dread. At this very moment he is there; what I touch, what I write is not more present, more visible; but why should I fear? why this trouble? Ah! if it only were so! . . .

Wednesday, October 5, 1774.

Mon ami, I have no letter from you; I expected one. Alas! I experience that the soul which hopes least can be

[1] Clement XIV., Lorenzo Ganganelli; author of the Bull which suppressed the Order of the Jesuits. He was thought to have been poisoned. — Fr. Ed.

disappointed. Forgive me: the need that I have of you makes me expect too much; I must be corrected of that error. I am ill, and in a state of inexpressible suffering; all kinds of nourishment do me equal harm. My physician concludes that some obstruction is forming in the pylorus; that strange word was unknown to me; but it is torture when that door shuts. I am taking hemlock; if it could be prepared like that of Socrates I should take it with pleasure. It would cure me of the slow and painful malady called life.

You do me harm, *mon ami;* you render death a necessity to me, and you hold me to life. What weakness! what inconsistency! Yes, I judge myself rightly; but I languish, I delay. I feel that there will come a day, a moment when I shall bitterly repent having delayed so long. If I cast my eyes upon the past I see that I should have been too fortunate if the end of my life had come on Wednesday, June 1 [the day she heard of M. de Mora's death]. *Mon Dieu!* what sorrow, what evils I should then have escaped. Yes, I shudder in thinking that I can blame no one but you for all that I have suffered since that fatal day. How ill-inspired you were! my death would have been no injury to you. At this moment when I write to you, you would not remember it; whereas, in place of that forgetfulness which would have left you to enjoy your repose and pleasure, I burden you with my woes, I make the whole weight of my life weigh upon your heart. Ah! I know well that susceptible, strong, and virtuous heart; it would be capable of making some great sacrifice to relieve the unhappy soul, but it is out of your power to take care of it, soothe it, calm it. Whatever is consecutive is to you impossible; your heart is impassioned, but it does not know tenderness. Passion only works spasmodically; it has actions, emotions; but tenderness gives care, it helps,

it comforts, it would have written by every courier, because it would have felt the needs of a suffering soul. No, these are not reproaches, they would be useless or distressing. Ah! how grieved I should be to give you an instant's pain.

Mon ami, I need to know if your fever has not returned, and if that of your sister is subdued. In writing to you the last time I was delirious, I think; I had a burning fever all night; it has left me now, and in leaving me it has effaced that image that hid all other objects from my sight; but I do not know why it brought such terror into my soul. Ah! if I could buy back his life for a single hour there is no pain I should not have the strength to bear; I should say with Zulime:—

> "Death and hell appear before me:
> Ramire! with transport I descend there for thee."

But, *mon ami*, I did not mean to say to you all this. I am confused; I cannot continue. Adieu.

Saturday, midnight.

First of all, I must tell you that your ink is white as paper, and to-day it has really put me out of patience. I had ordered your letter to be brought to me at M. Turgot's, where I was dining with twenty persons. It was given to me while at table; on one side I had the Archbishop of Aix, on the other, that inquisitive Abbé Morellet. I opened my letter under the table; I could scarcely see that any black was on the white, and the abbé made the same remark. Mme. de Boufflers, who was on the other side of the Archbishop of Aix, asked what I was reading. "Remember where we are, and you will know what it is."—"A memorial, no doubt, for M. Turgot?"—"Yes, just so, madame, and I wish to read it over before I give it to him."

Before returning to the salon I had read the letter through, and I am now going to reply to it — though I must do it hastily, for I am very tired with the great exertions that I made to-day. I have seen at least a hundred persons, and as your letter had done good to my soul, I talked, I forgot I was dead, and I have really extinguished myself. The truth is I had a "great success" because I brought out the charms and the intellects of the persons with whom I was; and it is to you, *mon ami*, that they owe that pastime, so sweet to their self-love. As for mine, it is not intoxicated by your praises; I reply to you, like Couci: "Love me, my prince, and praise me not."

Mon ami, keep yourself from ever again having the kindness to set forth my blessings and display my gifts; never did I feel myself so poor, so ruined, so poverty-stricken; in estimating what I have, in making me see my resources, you only show me that all is lost. One means alone remains to me, — I have long foreboded it, I even think it a necessity, — namely, to make total bankruptcy; but I postpone, I delay, I rock myself with hopes, with chimeras; I know them to be such, and yet they sustain me a little — but you destroy all by the horrible enumeration that you make of them. Ah! what a deplorable inventory! if any other than you had attempted to console me, to reconcile me to life by these hopeless consolations, I should say to him, like Agnes, "Horace, with two words, could do more than you" — but it *is* Horace who speaks to me! Oh! *mon ami*, my soul is sinking. What more will you invent to torture me? I shall be, you say, sustained, guaranteed, defended, etc. Well! never have I been all that; if you set your friendship at that value, I ask none of it. I have been weak, inconsistent, unhappy, very unhappy; I have feared for you; I have wandered in the wilderness; I have done wrong, no

doubt; and it is one harm the more to dwell upon it. I have not an impulse, I never say a word to you, that does not cause me regret or repentance. *Mon ami*, I ought to hate you. Alas! it is long since I have done what I ought, what I wish! I hate myself, I condemn myself, and I love you.

Sunday evening, October 9, 1774.

Mon ami, I have read your letter twice; and the total impression that I receive from it is that you are very amiable, and that it is much easier not to love you at all than to love you moderately. Make the commentary on that, but not with your mind; it is not to your mind that I speak. *Mon ami*, if I chose, I could dwell on certain words in your letter which have done me harm. You speak of my courage, my resources, the employment of my time, and of that of my soul in a manner to make me die of shame and regret for having suffered you to see my weakness. Ah, well! it was in my soul, of which no impulse can be hidden from you. When it was moved by hatred, I let you see it; but was hatred all that I allowed myself to feel?

Mon ami, on reading again the recapitulation that you make of all there is on earth to keep me from destruction, I ended by laughing over it because it reminded me of a saying of Président Hénault, which is good. At a certain period of his life he thought that, in order to add to the esteem in which he was held, it would be well to become devout; he made a general confession, and afterwards wrote to his friend M. d'Argenson, "Never do we feel so rich as when we move our belongings [*que lorsqu'on déménage*]."

I shall dine to-morrow with the Duchesse d'Anville. I like that house; it is one the more where I can see you; you live for what you love and for the gay world every evening; but will you not often dine where I do? That

will bring you into the society of those persons who are the most on your own tone. Fools and stupid people are never afoot before five or six o'clock; that is the time when I return to my chimney corner, where I nearly always find, if not what I should have chosen, at any rate nothing that I wish to avoid.

How is it that I have never yet told you that I am urged, entreated, to go and re-establish my health in England at the house of Lord Shelburne [Marquis of Lansdowne]? He is a man of intellect, the leader of the Opposition; he was the friend of Sterne, and adores his works. See what an attraction he must have for me, and whether I am not much tempted by his obliging invitation. Admit that if you had known of this piece of good fortune you would not have omitted it from my *pompous inventory.*

Yes, M. de Condorcet is with his mother; he works ten hours a day. He has a score of correspondents, intimate friends; and each, without fatuity, may think himself his first object; never, never did any man have more existence, greater means, so much felicity. I just remember that you have never said a word to me about the Duc de Choiseul; is it because your stay at Chanteloup has left no traces on your journey? Well! here is how he stands in Paris: the public takes no notice of him; it seems to me that the best thing for him at present is to remain in that state of oblivion, for he will gain nothing now by comparisons. We might have owed M. Turgot to him ten years ago, but he preferred to choose such ministers as Laverdy, Maupeou, Terrai, and others.

Your letter to M. d'Alembert is excellent; and as we are very communicative we gave it this evening to M. de Vaines, who was charmed with it, and desires to show it to him who could enjoy it without its alarming his modesty. You will

never guess what occupies my mind, what I desire to do: to marry *one of my friends.* I want an idea that has come to me to succeed; the Archbishop of Toulouse could be very helpful to the success of the affair. The young lady is sixteen years old and has only a mother, no father, and a brother. They will give her, on marrying, thirteen thousand francs a year; her mother will lodge her, and do so for a long time, because the son is a child. This girl cannot have less eventually than six hundred thousand francs, and she may be much richer: will that suit you, *mon ami?* Say so, and we will act; it can be done without offence, because the Archbishop of Toulouse has as much skill as courtesy. Let us talk it over; and if this plan does not succeed I know a man who would be very glad to have you for a son-in-law; but his daughter is only eleven years old; she is an only child and will be very rich. *Mon ami,* what I desire above all things is your happiness; and the means of procuring it for you will become the chief interest of my life. There was a time when my soul would have been less generous; but then it responded to one who would have rejected with horror the empire of the world. What a memory! how sweet, how cruel! Good-night; if I receive, as I hope, a letter from you to-morrow I will add to this volume. For the last two days I have suffered less. I have reached the stage of two chicken-wings a day, and if that regimen does not succeed better than the others, I shall put myself on a milk diet.

Still Sunday, October 9.

That adieu was very sudden, very abrupt, and you will readily understand that I have a thousand other things to say to you; for, if I am not mistaken, this is the last letter I shall write to you. As to this, I shall know to-morrow. You tell me that you are going to your regiment; you have twice

written to me the name of the place where it is stationed, but, thanks to the beauty of your writing, I do not know what it is. I seem to make out *Livourne*, but that, surely, cannot be where you are going [it was Libourne, a new garrison of the Corsican Legion]. *Mon ami*, write me from wherever you stop; you must compensate me for the privation of not writing to you. I do not feel certain that you have started as yet. How could you refuse your mother, — above all, if she is not convalescent? she must be ill if she still has fever. How I hope you are not mistaken and that I shall really see you in two weeks. Fifteen days! that is a long way off; once I looked for a nearer coming — Ah! I shudder! what a dreadful recollection! it poisons hope. Ah! *mon Dieu!* it was you who troubled and overthrew the happiness of that tender and impassioned soul; it was you who condemned us to an awful misfortune, and — it is you I love! Yes, we hate the evil that we do, but we are drawn to it. Without your consolation I should have died of grief, and now I am fated to live, to languish, to moan, to fear you, to love you, to curse life and to cherish it at some moments....

Here I was interrupted; persons came and proposed to me to go and see Duplessis. He is a portrait-painter who will stand beside Van Dyck. I do not know if you have seen the portrait of the Abbé Armaud painted by him; but, my friend, you must certainly see that of Gluck; it has a degree of truth and perfection which is better and greater than nature. He has put ten heads into it, all of different characters; I have never seen anything finer or truer in that respect. M. d'Argental came there, and showed us a letter he had just received from M. de Voltaire; I thought it so good, the tone so natural, it brought him so near to us, that, without thinking whether it were discreet or not, I asked for the letter; I asked for a copy; they are now making it, and

mon ami shall read it — that thought is at the bottom of everything. *Mon ami,* I must repeat myself and say, as Sterne to his Eliza, "Your pleasure is the first need of my heart."

Mon Dieu! how difficult it is to begin a letter when one has to make sentiment with one's mind. But I must write to Mme. de Boufflers. She has not once mentioned your name to me; I am not sorry; but how is it that persons do not seize every occasion to talk of that which pleases them? There is, of course, a certain degree of affection that hinders; it is that which prevents me from speaking to her of you, but she has never felt any such embarrassment, I am sure; she has nothing to do with loving, — she is too charming!

Mon ami, I know myself so well that I am tempted to think you are laughing at me when you speak of my successes in society. It is eight years since I retired from the world; from the moment that I loved I felt a disgust for such successes. What need have we of pleasing when we are beloved? Is there one emotion, one desire left that has not for its object the person whom we love and for whom we desire to live exclusively? *Mon ami,* you have no such desire, have you?

Friday, October 14, 1774.

Mon ami, I have just returned from hearing the "Orpheus;" it has soothed, it has calmed my soul. I wept, but my tears had no bitterness; my sorrow was gentle, my regrets were mingled with memories of you, and my thoughts rested on them without remorse. I wept for what I had lost, and I loved you; my heart was able for both.

Oh! what a charming art! what a divine art! Music was invented by a sensitive being who desired to console the unhappy. What beneficent balm in those enchanting sounds! *Mon ami,* for incurable sorrows we should take anodynes

only; and there are but three in all the world to soothe my heart: you first, *mon ami,* you, the most efficacious of all, you who lift me from my sorrow, who fill my soul with a sort of intoxication that takes from me the faculty of remembering and foreseeing. After this first of all blessing, which I treasure as the support and the resource of my despair, comes opium; it is not dear to me in itself, but it is necessary. And lastly, that which is agreeable to me, which charms away my griefs, is music. Music pours into my blood, into all that animates me, a sweetness, a sensibility so delightful that I may almost say it turns to joy my regrets and my misfortunes; and that is so true that in the happiest period of my life music was not to me then of the value it is now. *Mon ami,* before you went away I did not go to "Orpheus;" I did not feel the need of it; I saw, or I had seen you, or I expected you; that filled all; but since your absence, in the void about me, in the many and various crises of despair which have shaken and convulsed my soul, I have called all resources to my aid. How feeble they are! how impotent against the poison that eats away my life! But I must turn from myself and speak of you; I ought not to have changed that topic.

M. Turgot has written to you; he has made amends, for he asks you to do him a service, and I feel very sure that you have thus felt it. M. de Vaines said to me yesterday: "Make M. de Guibert return; he could enlighten us; he would be useful to us about things of which we are ignorant and need information." — The Comte de C . . . was at the Opera to-night; he came to see me in my box and talked much of his affairs. A great fortune is a great burden; he has many lawsuits, and is incessantly occupied with a mass of objects from which he derives neither profit nor fame. Ah! no, happiness is not in great riches. Where is it, then? among a

few erudites, very dull and very solitary; among good artisans, busy in a lucrative and not painful labour; among good farmers with large and active families, who live in decent comfort. All the rest of the world swarms with fools, imbeciles, and madmen; in the latter class are the unhappy — among whom I do not include those in Charenton; for the style of madness which makes a man suppose himself the Eternal Father may be better, perhaps, than wisdom or happiness.

I send an extract of a letter written to the Swedish ambassador; you will observe with what elegance foreigners speak French! I have not changed a comma. Everybody is at Fontainebleau, and I am glad of it; I should often like to write over my door, as some learned man did over his, "Those who come to see me do me honour, those who do not come give me pleasure." M. de Marmontel proposed to me to come last Wednesday and read me his new comic opera. He came; there were some twelve persons present. Behold us in a circle surrounding him, and listening to the "Vieux Garçon," — that was the name of the piece. The beginning of the first scene seemed to me muddled, confused. What do you think I then did, without my will having the slightest part in it? I did not listen to a word; and that is so true that if I were hanged for it, I could not have told the name of a personage or the subject of the play; I got out of it by telling the truth, namely, that the time seemed to me very short. The fact is that, since I have been unable to fix my attention upon anything, I love readings distractedly, because they leave me free; whereas in conversation we have to recall our thoughts. *Mon ami*, you may say what you please, but I do not like conversation unless it is you or the Chevalier de Chastellux who make it. Apropos, he is much pleased with me; I have stirred up his friends,

and things are so well arranged that all we need to get him received into the Academy is the death of one of the forty. It is a proper thing, no doubt, but it was not done without difficulty; the interest, the pleasure, the desire he put into this triumph spurred me on. *Mon Dieu!* Fontenelle was right: there are rattles for all ages; there is nought but sorrow too old for them, nought but passion too reasonable.

Mon ami, those are not paradoxes; think them over, and you will see they can be maintained. Good-night; it is time to let you breathe; I have written without pausing. Opera days are my times of retreat. I am alone when I come home; my door is closed. M. d'Alembert has been to see "Harlequin;" he likes that better than "Orpheus." Every one has good reasons, and I am far from criticising tastes; all are good. Adieu, till to-morrow.

Saturday, three o'clock, after the postman.

I dined at home to get my letter from you an hour earlier; that replies to your last question. But, *mon ami*, you truly grieve me by not saying a word as to why you did not write to me by the last courier. You feel you did wrong, and you want to turn my mind away from it by promising to do better in future; you are very amiable, *mon ami*, and I thank you in advance. I dare not desire your return, but I count the days of your absence. *Mon Dieu!* how slow they are! how long they are! how they weigh upon my soul! how difficult, how impossible it is to distract one's self a moment from the soul's need! Books, society, friendship, all imaginable resources serve only to make us feel more keenly the value and power of what we lack.

I do not answer, but I am touched to the depths of my heart by what you say to me of M. de Mora. M. d'Alembert has written to M. de Fuentès; he wrote from his own

impulse; and in reading me his letter he wept, and made me, too, burst into tears. Ah! how that thought rends me! *Mon ami,* I want to think now of you, and to justify the feeling that made me burn your letters. I did not think I should survive that sacrifice a day, and as I made it my blood, my heart were frozen with despair, so that I did not fully feel the loss I had inflicted on myself for over six days. Ah! twenty times, a hundred times I have grieved to have burned what you had written: nothing can repair that loss; it is heart-breaking.

Yes, M. Turgot is at work about the *corvées.* Good-bye, *mon ami;* are you not weary of reading these scribblings?

Sunday evening, October 16, 1774.

Mon ami, I did not answer your charming letter yesterday, and I shall never answer to my *own satisfaction* what you say to me of M. de Fuentès. Ah! where shall I find expressions to render a feeling so novel to my soul? You have filled me with the tenderest, warmest gratitude; it seems to me that never did I owe so much to any one; your emotion, your sentiment, are noble and lofty as virtue itself; why should I not make my happiness in adoring them? I do not know the nature of my own feeling, but you are the object of it, and there are moments when I am ready to exclaim that remorse is no longer in my heart.

Alas! I dare not say those words; I feel, I know that conscience cannot be deceived. What trouble rises within me! how unhappy I am! *Mon ami,* do you think it possible that peace can return to my soul by loving you? — or do you think it possible that I can live without loving you? It is of you that I ask knowledge of myself; I know myself no longer; with a word you change the disposition of my soul. I know not if this is so because I am weakened by

suffering, or because my feeling is strengthened by the pains I take to combat and destroy it. If it be the latter, admit that I have a very high opinion of myself! Ah! *mon Dieu!* how natural passion is to me, and how foreign is reason! *Mon ami,* never did any one so reveal herself; but how could I hide from you my inmost thoughts? — they are filled by you; and how could I live if I knew I were usurping your esteem and good opinion? No, *mon ami,* see me as I am, and grant me — not what I deserve, but — what I need to keep me from dying of grief, or to give me courage, for I know not which I prefer to owe to you, life or death. Both depend on you, and whichever way you decide, I shall thank you.

Mon ami, did you feel as you wrote them the force of those words: "My greatest misfortune would be to make you cold to me"? — and you wish to "diminish my torture." Ah heavens! what a means you employ to that end! But I will not return upon the past. I hope I shall be deceived by you no more. If I am not what you love best I shall at least see in your soul the place you assign me, and I pledge myself to seek no other.

I went again to "Orpheus" this evening; but I was with Mme. de Châtillon: it is true that I should have a very bad opinion of myself if I did not love her; she exacts so little and gives so much.

Monday morning.

How can you question whether you ought to have left me in ignorance of your fever? Oh! *mon ami,* it is not I whom you ought to spare; I love you too well not to prefer to suffer with you and through you. Those who spare one another do not love; there is a wide distance between the feelings we command and those which command us: the first are perfect, and I abhor them. If some day you become per-

fect like Mme. de B . . . , like the cold Grandison, I shall admire you, *mon ami*, but I shall be radically cured.

Here I was interrupted by Mme. de Châtillon; she asks to write on the rest of this sheet; I give her paper and pens — but my letter, it is not possible!

Monday, after the postman.

You have been alarmed — you are still distressed. *Mon Dieu!* how I suffer from all that makes you suffer, and how grieved I am for having added to the anxiety of your present condition. Yes, I am guilty, I am weak, I condemn myself, I hate myself, but that will not repair the harm I have done to you. You saw by the following post that this fever was merely the result of the violent state of my soul; my body is not strong enough to support these shocks. *Mon ami*, do not pity me; say to yourself, "She is beside herself;" that thought will calm you, and if you do not suffer I am happy. But I hope that you will tell me, carefully and with details, all the news of your patients. It is dreadful to fear for those we love; that species of torture is more than my strength and my reason can bear.

Mon Dieu! yes, you must stay with your family; your departure would do them great harm, and you must spare them during the whole time that their health is in question. But I need not say this to you; you see things better than I; you feel with greater delicacy. *Mon ami*, I am almost discontented because you do not find pleasure in making me share your present condition, especially as it is painful to you; I would have you say with Montaigne, but in a contrary sense, "Methinks I rob her of her part." Yes, *mon ami*, you ought to feel that you have no longer the right to suffer alone. Alas! I am so wholly on the tone of those who suffer, they speak my language so distinctly, that it seems to me there is

no need to count on my affections in order to find sweetness in complaint to me.

Adieu, *mon ami;* I meant to write you a thousand nothings but your sadness takes away my strength. In vain I say to myself: "When my letter reaches him his condition will no longer be the same" — but that in which you were possesses me; it cannot change for me until you will it should. Ah! what ascendency! what force! what power! it acts through a thousand leagues! I told you that the sentiment I dare not name is the sole thing on earth that men have been unable to spoil. *Mon ami,* if it were lost, tell yourself always, so long as I live, that you know where it lives, where it reigns with more vigour than it does in most Frenchwomen.

Friday evening, October 21, 1774.

Mon ami! how slowly time rolls on! since Monday last I am weighed down by it; there is nothing I have not tried, to cheat my impatience. I am perpetually in motion; I have been everywhere, I have seen everything, and I have had but one thought — to a sick soul nature has but one colour; all things are swathed in crape. Tell me, how do people distract their thoughts! how do they console themselves? Ah! it is from you alone that I can learn to endure life; you alone can shed upon it that charm mingled with sorrow which makes me cherish and detest existence alternately.

Mon ami, I shall have a letter from you to-morrow; that hope alone gives me strength to write to you to-night. You will tell me if you are reassured about the health of your dear ones; and perhaps you will speak of your return; but, at any rate, you will speak to me. If you only knew how destitute, abandoned, I feel when I have no news of you! Ah! how short your little letter was! how cold! It seemed to me that in saying how uneasy and even alarmed you were, you

were not saying all! What is it? are you hiding your heart from me? do you wish still to rend mine? Have you not told me that you would tell me all; that you would give me a confidence without reserve; that I was your friend; that your soul could pour itself into mine; that you would make me live in all your emotions; that whatever wounded my heart could never be unknown by yours? Ah! *mon ami*, know me well; see what I am for you; and, having that knowledge, it will be impossible for you to conceive a project of deceiving me, or even of concealing anything from me.

Saturday morning.

I left you yesterday out of consideration for you; I was so sad! I had just come from "Orpheus." That music drives me wild; it sweeps me away; I cannot miss it a single day; my soul thirsts for that species of pain. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how little I am on the key of those about me! yet never had any one more cause to treasure friendship. My friends are excellent persons; their attentions, their interest never flags; and I now comprehend what they find in me to attach them. It is my sorrow, it is my trouble, it is what I say, it is what I do not say, that stirs them, that warms their hearts. Yes, I see it, kind and feeling hearts love the unhappy; they find in them an attraction that occupies and employs their soul; we love to feel ourselves feeling, and the sorrows of others have just that measure which makes us compassionate without suffering. Well! I promise them that enjoyment so long as it remains to me to live.

Mon ami, I meant to tell you, the last time I wrote, that you ought to lodge in the same furnished house as the Chevalier d'Aguesseau; that would spare you both the trouble of going to see each other; it would be convenient for you, and I should be secured against your quitting my

quarter. Yes, it is always some personal interest that underlies all, that prompts all, and the fools and the false wits who have attacked Helvétius have doubtless never loved, and never reflected. Ah! good God! how many people live and die without having felt the one or done the other! So much the better for them, so much the worse for us — yes, so much the worse; for I cannot express to you the disgust, the paroxysms of disgust, which I feel, not for the fools, but for those who are so much of my own kind that I foresee what they are going to say before they open their lips. — Ah! I am very ill! I can no longer endure those who resemble me; all that is beside me, on my level, seems so small; I need to be made to raise my eyes; without which I am wearied and dulled. *Mon ami,* society offers me now but two interests: I must love, or I must be enlightened. Intelligence is not enough, I want much intellect; that is saying that I now listen to five or six persons only, and that I read but six or seven books. Yet there are many more persons than that who have claims upon me; but they are claims of feeling and confidence, and do not alter my condition of mind in general. Here is the result: what is less than myself smothers me and crushes me; what is at my level dulls me and fatigues me. It is only that which is above me that sustains me and tears me from myself; I shall ever say with the old classic, "Friends! save me from myself." All this proves that vanity, extinct within me, is replaced by universal and deadly disgust.

The Comtesse de Boufflers has not reached that point, therefore she is very agreeable. I have seen her often this week; she came to dine with Mme. Geoffrin on Wednesday and was charming; she did not say a word that was not a paradox. She was attacked, and defended herself so wittily that her fallacies were almost as good as truth. For in-

stance: she said it was a great misfortune to be an ambassador, it mattered not from what country or to what nation; it was dreadful exile, etc. Then she told us that, in the days when she liked England best, she would never have consented to live there permanently unless she could have taken with her twenty-four or five of her intimate friends, and sixty to eighty other persons who were absolutely necessary to her; and it was with much seriousness and especially with much feeling that she thus informed us of the needs of her soul. What I wish you could have seen was the astonishment she caused in Lord Shelburne. He is simple, natural; he has soul and strength; he likes and is attracted by that only which resembles himself, at least in being natural. He went to see M. de Malesherbes, and returned enchanted. He said to me: "I have seen for the first time in my life what I did not believe could exist, — a man whose soul is absolutely exempt from fear and hope, but who, nevertheless, is full of life and ardour. Nothing in the world can trouble his peace; nothing is necessary to him, but he interests himself keenly in all that is good." And then he added: "I have travelled much, and I have never brought away with me so deep an impression. If I do any good during the time that remains to me to live, I am certain that the recollection of M. de Malesherbes will inspire my soul." *Mon ami*, that is noble praise, and he who gives it is, beyond a doubt, an interesting man. I think him very fortunate to be born an Englishman; I have seen much of him and listened to him much; he has intellect, ardour, elevation of soul. He reminds me a little of the two men in the world whom I have loved, and for whom I would live or die. He goes away next week, and I am glad; he has been the cause, through social arrangements, that I have dined every day with fifteen persons, and that fatigues

me more than it interests. I need repose; my bodily machine is worn-out. Good-bye, *mon ami*, I await the post; that is what is necessary to me.

Saturday, October 22, 1774.

Mon Dieu! how troubled and grieved I am by what you tell me. I believe all that I fear; imagine, therefore, how I share what you suffer. Ah! it is at such moments that separation is absolutely intolerable to me. *Mon ami*, your troubles are mine, and it is dreadful to me to be unable to comfort you. It seems to me that if I were with you I could so take possession of your fears, your troubles, that nothing would remain to you but that which I could not take away. Ah! to share is not enough. I would suffer through you, for you; and with such tenderness, such passion, there is no sorrow that could not be assuaged, no alarm that could not be quieted. *Mon Dieu!* how unfortunate I am! At the only moment of my life when I might have done you good, I am condemned to be useless to you! Those who love you will say to you what I should say — better, perhaps. I am too near you to express what I feel. Are there words that can render all the emotions of a suffering soul, of a soul struck by terror, and to which misfortune has forbidden hope? *Mon ami*, in this state, which is mine, we can express and explain ourselves by three words only: "I love you."

Ah! if they could pass into your soul just as I feel them! Yes, if they could, whatever be your sorrow, you would feel a gentler feeling. *Now it is* that I have a mortal regret at all you lack in affection for me; *mon ami*, were it otherwise, we could make our consolation; the remedy would be beside the ill. Ah! when one is in trouble it is dreadful to love feebly: for it is in ourselves that we find true strength, and nothing gives it so much as passion; the feelings of another

please us, touch us; there are none but our own that support us.

But that resource fails nearly all the world; nearly all who exist love only because they are loved. Ah! *mon Dieu!* what a poor way! how small and feeble it leaves the soul! But this depends neither on will nor on thought; it is therefore as senseless to seek to excite it as to labour to quench it. Let us stay, then, what we are, until nature, or I know not what, ordains otherwise.

You are too kind, a thousand times too kind to occupy your mind with my ills. To suffer has become my existence; still I am better since I have taken chicken for my only nourishment; I suffer less. Adieu, *mon ami*, I speak of myself and think only of you. From now till Monday I shall be in a violent state. You will write me, I believe.

Sunday evening, October 23, 1774.

Mon ami, to calm myself, to deliver myself from a thought that pains me, I must speak to you. I await to-morrow's post-hour with an impatience that you alone, perhaps, can conceive. You will hear me, if you cannot answer me, and that is something. It would be, no doubt, sweeter, more consoling, to speak in dialogue; but monologue is endurable when we can say to ourselves, "I speak in solitude, but I am heard."

Mon ami, I am in a detestable physical condition, which I attribute to that hemlock; it retained, I believe, some poisonous property; I feel an exhaustion, a faintness, which has made me think twenty times to-day that I was about to lose consciousness, and at this moment I feel an inexpressible distress. I feel what Fontenelle described shortly before his death, — "a great difficulty in *being*." But that which excites my soul will give me strength to write. *Mon ami*,

I do not know if I told you I had seen the wife of Comte . . . ; her appearance is common, but her tone is obliging, and she shows a great desire to please; nevertheless, such as she is, I should not think her good enough to be the wife of the man I love most. *Mon ami*, I am more than ever sure that a man who has talent, genius, and is destined to fame, ought not to marry. Marriage is a veritable extinguisher of all that is great and may be dazzling. If a man is honourable and feeling enough to be a good husband, he will be nothing more; no doubt that is enough if happiness is there. But there are men destined by Nature to be great and not happy. Diderot says that Nature in creating a man of genius, waves her torch above his head and says to him, "Be great, and be unhappy." That, I think, is what she said on the day that you were born. Good-night, I can no more; to-morrow!

Monday, after post-time.

No letter! I should tremble were it another than you; but I reassure myself a little by remembering that it is not in you to be punctual or consecutive. This is natural, but also afflicting. *Mon ami*, I make you no reproaches; I only pity you, whatever be your situation, that the thought of your soul was not for me. Adieu; I am depressed, and in a state of weakness which is extraordinary; it requires an effort to hold my pen. I shall no longer expect letters from you; but I shall desire them as long as I breathe.

Tuesday evening, October 25, 1774.

Ah! I have been unjust; that would be a wrong in any one, but I reproach myself for it as a crime with you. Forgive me, *mon ami;* I ought to have thanked you, and I blamed you. That thought hurts me as though I were guilty; but the post was guilty, and I suspected it so little that when

they brought me my letters to-day I did not look at the outside of them; I did not care which I read first or last. *Mon ami,* when I opened the second I gave a cry; it was your writing! my heart palpitated. If it is a very painful ill to await and *see nothing come,* it is a very keen and very lively pleasure to be thus surprised. *Mon ami,* I love you to madness; all things tell it to me, all things prove it — and often more than I wish. I give you more than you desire; you have no need of being so much loved, and I, I have much need of repose, that is, of death.

But I am too selfish; I talk to you of myself, whereas I ought to tell you of the pleasure with which I read your words: "Better — all goes well — I am at ease." Ah! *mon ami,* I breathed again; it seemed as if those words gave back to me both life and strength; for three days I was annihilated; they say this condition came from the nerves, but I who know more than my doctor, I know that it came from you. I am like Lucas, who explains everything by his vocation of gardener. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how can I suffice for all I feel, for all I suffer? — and yet my soul has but two feelings: one consumes me with sorrow, and when I give myself up to the other, which ought to calm me, I am pursued by remorse and by a regret more heart-breaking still than the tortures of remorse. Myself again! how I detest this ceaseless return! do I banish myself in saying that I adore your sensibility and your truth?

Ah! hide nothing from me; you gain much by letting me see all the emotions that move you. *Mon ami,* in a situation precisely like that in which you have been, but which had fatal results, M. de Mora wrote me, with almost the same expressions as yours, the anguish that his mother's illness caused him. I have already told you never to have the thought of sparing me; believe that my feelings will lead

me much farther than you could make me go. *Mon ami*, it is good to know that your mother's convalescence is so near, but, in spite of what you say, I feel that you will stay there longer than you think. You will certainly commit the *heedlessness* of forgetting to tell me not to write to you and where to write to you on your way. Then, when no letters reach you, you will blame me, or you will have the kindness to feel anxious; yet a little forethought would avoid it all.

The Chevalier de Chastellux is at present at Chanteloup with the Duc de Choiseul. He keeps up with everything, and attaches great importance to this manner of multiplying himself indefinitely. He is so rich and so generous that he disdains to gather in for himself; it suffices him to sow; he receives nothing; he gives everywhere and to everybody. He told me the other day that his pleasure lay in producing effects. M. de Chamfort has arrived; I have seen him, and we read together his "Eulogy on La Fontaine." He returns from the baths in good health, richer in fame and wealth, and possessed of four friends who love him, namely: Mesdames de Grammont, de Rancé, d'Amblimont, and the Comtesse de Choiseul. This assortment is almost as variegated as Harlequin's coat, but it is only the more piquant, agreeable, and charming. I assure you that M. de Chamfort is a very well-satisfied young man; and he does his best to be modest. M. Grimm has returned from Russia. I have overwhelmed him with questions. He pictures the Czarina [Catherine II.], not as a sovereign, but as an interesting woman, full of wit and good sayings, and all that can seduce and charm. In what he told me of her I recognize more the charming art of the Greek courtesan than the dignity and state of the empress of a great empire.

But a greater painter in another manner has returned to us; I mean Diderot; he sends me word that I shall see him

to-morrow; I shall be very glad. But in the present condition of my soul, he is the man of all others whom I would rather not see habitually; he forces the attention, and that is precisely what I cannot and will not give consecutively to any one. When I say that, you understand that it means I do not wish my thoughts to be distracted from the one person who fills them wholly. Ah! what a clumsy explanation! But the truth is you are stupid; one must ticket a thing to make you understand it. Courage, *mon ami;* for I think that by this time you have had a ream of paper without deducting a single page. You can put off the reading of it till you are in your travelling-carriage; I shall occupy your journey, and you will find me at the end of it.

So you really think that you will be glad to see me? What you say to me is so agreeable. It would be sweet, indeed, to be loved by you! but my soul cannot attain to that degree of happiness; it would be too much. A few moments, a few flashes of pleasure, — that is enough for the unhappy; they breathe and recover courage to suffer.

Wednesday, October 26, 1774.

I have just re-read your letter; a sentence had escaped my notice, and it delights me; you say, "I return to our troubles . . . " Ah! tell me on what thought I can rest to breathe in peace; on that of your arrival? No, no, it makes me quiver; I dare not even desire it; if it were delayed I believe I should die. Can you conceive such an excess of inconsistency? But that excess does not proceed from false reasoning; it comes from a soul convulsed by the most contending emotions, which you may, perhaps, understand, but are unable to share.

I am interrupted, and again by Mme. de Châtillon. I begin to think that the first of all qualities required to

make others love us is to be loving. You cannot imagine all that she invents to reach my heart. Ah! if you loved me as she does! — no, no! I do not wish it; heaven preserve me from knowing twice in my life such happiness.

Friday, October 28, 1774.

What say you to that invocation? does it not seem as if I had lost my head? *Mon ami*, it comes from an honourable sentiment. I wronged M. de Mora, and I find a sort of sweetness in thinking that he alone will have made me know happiness; that it is to him only that I shall ever owe having felt, for a short while, all the value that life can have. Sometimes I feel myself less guilty because I am punished; and, do you not see, all that would be reversed, effaced, if I were loved? I must hold to virtue by remorse, and to him who loved me by regret for having lost him. That regret is very keen and heart-rending; there are few days when it does not cause me convulsions of despair.

They forced me to go and see Lekain in "Tancrède;" I had not seen it since its improvement, and I did not care to. However, I went; the first two acts wearied me excessively; the third has much interest, which goes on increasing to the end; in the fifth act there were moments, words which transported me to the scene at Bordeaux. I thought I was dying; I lost consciousness, and they were obliged to watch with me all night because I had continual fainting fits. I could not speak to you of this the last few days; I was too near to the impression I had received; I promised myself not to go in search of such shocks again. I can bear nothing but "Orpheus," and I find with regret that you will not see it. There is to be a new opera November 8; the music is by Floquet. The public may like it perhaps; after what is good it applauds what is mediocre, and even what is

detestable, — for M. Dorat has had success. And it is the public that make reputations! — but the public of the long run; for that of the moment never has the taste nor the intelligence which sets the seal on what should go down to posterity. Bring me back the Linguet [a political and literary journal]. Everybody is at Fontainebleau; but we still have Baron de Kock and Baron Gleichen, and they stay too late in the evenings for me. I do not know if I deceive myself, but I believe solitude would be good for me; society seldom interests me now, and it always weighs upon me. Oh! what a poor invalid I am! In vain I turn to this and that; I am only the worse for it. Adieu, *mon ami.*

I have just seen the Comte de C . . . I told him he would have to breathe malarious air, for in the intoxication of felicity in which he is living it could only be a work of mercy in him to come and see me, and that I should be to him like those monuments that some philosophers preserve to make them remember to be good and just. "You will come and see me," I said, "and when you go away you will say to yourself: 'Trouble does exist on earth, after all;' your heart will be touched by my sorrows, and mine will have enjoyed your felicity."

The letters of M. de Condorcet are really charming. If I followed my first impulse I should write you all that I have felt about them; but I stop, saying to myself: "He will soon return, I will let him read them; he will laugh at me and think me very enthusiastic — well, perhaps so, but *he will be here.*" *Mon ami,* on that condition I would consent not to have common-sense for the rest of my life; but then you would abandon me and I should be lost in the crowd — well, stupidity would console me there. I think that during all this time "The Gracchi" must have been forgotten [tragedy

in verse by M. de Guibert]. But you will return to them with more ardour and interest. *Mon ami,* admire my transitions; stupidity leads me to genius, and this progression is very natural; it is M. Turgot after the Abbé Terrai. There are cases where gradations and intermediaries disappear.

I do not know what to do with the time between now and Saturday; I shall make a little of it weigh on you by obliging you to read me. I hope — I promise myself a long letter on Saturday. Suppose I am disappointed! suppose that it is only four pages long! Oh, then I should complain. *Mon ami,* you see good luck has turned my head; I become almost saucy just because I have had news of you to-day. What is very certain is that if others were in my secret they would know from my health and my whole manner of being whether I have had a letter from you. Yes, the circulation of my blood is perceptibly changed, and at such times it is impossible for me to take part in anything. But what I never become indifferent to is the increased interest that my state inspires in my friends. *Mon Dieu!* would they pity me if they saw into the depths of my heart? That usurpation of my love, was it not criminal? *Mon ami,* do not make my conscience false; pity me, console me; you have only too long misled me.

I have a fancy to send you the letter I took up and read before yours to-day (could I have had a presentiment, *that* would not have been the order of my reading); you will see from this letter whether I have suffered from your absence. Yes, I have made M. d'Alembert very uneasy. The man who writes the letter knows nothing of all that fills my thoughts; he thinks me a victim of virtue and prejudice; but for the last three years he has seen me so unhappy that he is sometimes inclined to think me mad. He spends his life in making epigrams against me; but the fact is, the point of

them is always a touch of sentiment or of wrath. Read and recognize; very surely he is a man of intellect.

Sunday, October 30, 1774.

I am notified too late; a package has gone to the post to-day; when your letter came I had already sent it to M. Turgot to be countersigned. I expected to write you a line after the arrival of the postman, and send it in the usual way, but no matter. I hope that my volume will not be lost; it will surely be sent to you, and with all the more care because M. Turgot's name will be seen upon it.

I think, truly, that it is easy to criticise you without wounding you; but it is not so easy to praise you as I feel that you deserve, without running the risk of being thought exaggerated, insipid, and monotonous. Well, I abandon myself to it, and will tell you coarsely that your letter to M. Turgot is excellent, perfect; it is the right tone, the proper measure; in short, it is *you*, and I know nothing better or greater on earth. I told you, *mon ami*, that henceforth I could look only at that which made me raise my eyes; but you, you are so high that I could not lift them to you long without too great an effort. Ah! *mon ami*, how I wish you had a fortune; I wish you had easy circumstances; I wish you were not forced to wear out your talents, to wring the neck of your genius; in short, I wish you were not condemned to put yourself back among the common herd. Yes, on my honour, it is for your sake, for the interests of your fame only, that I look for your marriage; in that respect I can truly say with Racine, "The day is not purer than the depth of my heart." All that means, *mon ami*, that if an excellent match offered itself, if you had one in view, if I or my friends could help you, oh! count on the zeal, the activity, the passion we would put into making it successful; yes,

I should again know joy and pleasure, if I could see you happy.

What pretty verses those are in your letter! That need to "live strongly" is, I believe, the need of the damned. That recalls to me a speech of passion that gave me pleasure. "If ever," it was said to me, "if ever I grow calm again, I shall feel myself in torture." That language is for the use of only such persons as are endowed with the sixth sense, *soul*. Yes, *mon ami*, I am fortunate enough, or unfortunate enough, to have the same dictionary as yourself. I understand, or rather I feel, your definitions, whereas for three-fourths of the time I do not comprehend the Chevalier. He is so content with what he does, he knows so well what he will do, he loves reason so truly, in a word, he is so proper about everything, that once I came near speaking and writing to him as the Chevalier Grandison — but without envying the fate of Clementina or Miss G . . .

You know, of course, that the Comte de Broglie commands at Metz in place of M. de Conflans. *Mon ami*, there 's a witty man; I wish he might be useful to you, to you who have not his wit. Apropos of wit, I must tell you a saying of the Czarina to Diderot. They often argued; and one day when the dispute was more lively than usual, the Czarina stopped short, saying: "We are both too excited to be reasonable; your head is hot and mine is warm, we shall not know what we are saying —" "With this difference," cried Diderot, "that you can say what you please without impropriety, whereas I may fail in —" "For shame!" interrupted the Czarina, "what difference is there between men?" *Mon ami*, read that correctly and do not be as stupid as M. d'Alembert, who could see nothing in it but difference of sex, whereas the speech is only charming as being that of a sovereign speaking to a philosopher. She said to him on another occasion: "Some-

times I see you a hundred years old, and then again, like a child of twelve." That is sweet, and pretty, and paints Diderot. If you loved children a little more, I would tell you that I think I have observed that what pleases up to a certain point always has some analogy with them; they have such grace, such suppleness, so much of Nature! In fact, Harlequin is a composition of child and cat; and what could be more graceful.

Do you know what vexes me about that package that is running after you? You will receive so late the letter asking pardon for having blamed you unjustly; the post was guilty, not you, and I was its accomplice. But is it you or the post who are to blame this time? You write me, "I answer your letters of the 9th and 14th." Why do you jump, feet together, over the 11th, which was a Tuesday? I have written by all the couriers since that moment when I was mad with a fatal madness.

Mon ami, you will miss a great day, that of the re-opening of parliament. Oh! the crowd of spectators promise themselves great pleasures; but wise people like myself do not concern themselves about this first moment; it is the results, the consequences of this event which have such interest. The question is, are they judges or tyrants whom we are about to replace on the *fleurs-de-lis?*— You ask why I do not talk to the Chevalier about "Orpheus." *Mon ami,* because it would be barbarous to talk of colours at the Quinze-Vingts [blind asylum]. Adieu.

Monday, eleven o'clock at night, November 7, 1774.

Mon ami, it seems to me that you have rights over all the emotions and sentiments of my soul. I owe you an account of all my thoughts; I do not feel assured of their correctness until I communicate them to you. Listen to me, therefore,

and judge my judgment, or rather my instinct; for I have nought but that for things of intellect, of art, and of taste. Yes, *mon ami*, the Academy of Marseille has only done justice in crowning M. de Chamfort. Ah! *mon Dieu!* at what a distance now seems to me that Eulogy which gave me such pleasure, and will give me more! How rich is this one [Chamfort's "Eulogy on La Fontaine"]! how full of intelligence, intelligence of all kinds, refinement, strength, elevation, philosophy! How lively the style, how animated and rapid, how filled it is with happy expressions, how original the tone and turn of the phrases! In a word, I am truly charmed, and if I did not fear to spoil your pleasure I would quote to you some points, each more piquant than the rest. I recommend to you page 14. Tell me, am I mistaken? is it not full of the most exquisite sensibility? has he not ennobled benefactions and gratitude? does he not express all the sentiments that a lofty, sensitive, and impassioned soul would desire to feel and to inspire? *Mon ami*, I am so satisfied with it that I could wish you had done it; and yet I am certain that you could do better; you would go higher, you would not have his defects. But pronounce your verdict quickly: have I too much enthusiasm? At any rate no one has put it into me; for I have seen and heard no one. I received the Eulogy at nine o'clock; I nearly died of impatience to be alone: I have read it, and give you my first impressions, at the risk of your thinking them devoid of common-sense.

Let nothing turn you, in disgust, from reading to me what you write; I will be Molière's servant; I will discuss nothing, but I shall feel all. What taste and intelligence you show in narrowing your subject. In the best of tragedies there are tedious and languid passages. You will avoid these defects; the interest will always be sustained by the subject

and action of the play. The mind of the author will never appear, but the soul and genius of M. de Guibert will fill and animate the whole. *Mon ami*, why that *oath* not to read me at once, immediately, what I desire so much to hear and feel? Is it because what moves you is not what I would desire to know and think for the rest of my life?

Ah! how ill you understood me in the first instance, and how well you have since replied to me about Lord Shelburne! Yes, it is just that, his being the leader of the Opposition, that makes me esteem and like him. How could one *not* be disconsolate at being born under a government like ours? As for me, weak and unfortunate being that I am, if I could be born again I would rather be the lowest member of the House of Commons than even the King of Prussia; nothing but Voltaire's fame could console me for not having been born an Englishman. One word more about Lord Shelburne and I will never speak of him again. How do you think he rests his brain and his soul from the worries of government? In doing deeds of beneficence that are worthy of a sovereign; in creating public institutions for the education of all the tenants of his estates, entering into all the details of their instruction and comfort. That, *mon ami*, is the relaxation of a man who is only thirty-four years old, and whose soul is as tender as it is great and strong. There is an Englishman worthy to have been the friend of the wonder and miracle of the Spanish nation [M. de Mora]. That is the man whom I wish you could have seen; but if you had, you would always have regretted him; for assuredly he is not made to live in this country. He leaves on the 13th; he wants to see the re-entrance of our parliament; meanwhile he is giving himself up to the dissipations of Paris. In all his life he has never known that species of relaxation; he finds much delight and charm in it. "It is pleasure," he said to me,

"because it will not last; for such a life forever would become the most intolerable weariness." How far that is from a Frenchman, from one of those agreeable men at Court. Ah! Président Montesquieu was right when he said, "The government makes the man." A man gifted with energy, loftiness of soul, and genius is in this country a lion chained in a menagerie; the sense that he has of his strength tortures him; he is a Patagonian condemned to walk on his knees. *Mon ami*, there is but one career open for glory, but it is noble. It is that of the Molières, the Racines, the Voltaires, the d'Alemberts, etc. Yes, *mon ami*, you must limit yourself to that because the world so wills it. Good-night; I do not know if this letter will start; but I have talked with you, and I am satisfied.

Sunday, ten o'clock at night, November 13, 1774.

Ah! *mon ami*, you have hurt me; it is a great curse, for you and for me, this feeling that inspires me. You do right to tell me you have no need of being loved as I can love. No, that is not according to your measure. You are so perfectly amiable and agreeable that you are, or will become, the first object of those charming ladies who put on their heads all that is inside of them, and are so lovable that they love themselves in preference to all else. You will make the pleasure, you will crown the vanity of all those women. By what fatality did you hold me to life only to make me die of uneasiness and pain? *Mon ami*, I make no complaint, but I grieve that you set no value on my peace of mind; that thought freezes and tears my heart by turns.

How is it possible to have a moment's tranquillity with a man whose head is as bad as his carriage, who thinks of no danger, who foresees nothing, who is incapable of punctuality, who never by any chance does what he has planned; in a

word, a man carried away by everything, whom nothing can stop or fix? Oh! my God! is it in thine anger, in thy vengeance, that thou hast doomed me to love and adore him who is the torture and despair of my soul? — Yes, *mon ami*, what you call your faults may perhaps kill me, — I hope they may, — but nothing can chill me. If my will, if reason, if reflection could have done anything, should I have loved you? Alas! at what a time was I pushed, precipitated into this abyss of misfortune! I shudder at it still!

Good-night; not once has my door been opened to-day that my heart did not beat; there were moments when I dreaded to hear your name, and then again I was broken-hearted at not hearing it. So many contradictions, so many conflicting emotions are true, and three words explain them: *I love you.*

1774.

Your letter of Thursday morning was hard and unjust; that of an hour earlier was overwhelming from the excess of truth and unreserve with which you tell me that you have never loved me, and that henceforth you cannot live for any one, etc. and etc. Do you know that such an avowal turns my remorse to shame? I cannot think of myself without horror, and from you I turn away my thoughts; I wish to neither judge you nor hate you.

Yesterday you came so late, and were so eager to get away that you proved to me you yielded to my note; and that seemed to me very natural. I only mention this to let you know that I am aware that you will not be annoyed at not seeing me this morning. I expect the Archbishop of Aix; he has something he wishes to say to me. My door will be closed. In the afternoon I am going to pay visits and I shall not return home till after eight o'clock. To-morrow I dine with the Comte de C . . . and have visits to pay until eight

o'clock. I tell you my arrangements, not that I think they will influence yours, but to spare you the trouble of trying to see me or avoid me.

The person who disposes of you and of your time will not allow you to give yourself up to the disgust you feel for the world and for society. You will find distraction, peace, pleasure, happiness with her and at her house; and you will no longer be afflicted by the mortal disgust which must surely be attached to the wrong of deceiving those who love us. Ah! it was not worth while. You must feel very guilty towards her; yield yourself up *this time* to the invincible penchant that allures you; offend her no longer by putting any comparison between the feeling that you owe to her and that with which others inspire you. *Mon Dieu!* I know not why I should speak of what occupies your mind; it is, doubtless, from the habit of always liking to please you.

We read last night the "Eulogy of Reason" [by Voltaire]. They all thought it excellent. I wish you had heard it. The reading did not finish till ten o'clock.

Eleven at night, 1774.

I have read your note. It is very gentle, it is very honest; your conversation was very harsh, very cruel even. I was crushed by it. Never, no never, was my soul so beaten down, my body more weakened. You had formed the intention of never seeing me again. Well, then, why change it? You gave me strength to accomplish my intention, to satisfy the most urgent need of my soul; we should both have been relieved and delivered; I, of a burden which overpowers me, you, of the sight of a sorrow which annoys you often and always weighs upon you. No, I have no thanks to give you I prefer your first impulse to your reflection. In doing me wrong you gave me strength: in consoling me, as I have

told you again and again, you hold me back, but you do not bind me to you. Oh! it is perhaps you who make me feel in a deeper and more heart-rending manner the loss I have met with. Nothing would have led me to compare you deliberately; this involuntary thought casts me often into despair; in this condition of mind I know not which is the most dreadful, my regrets or my remorse. But what does all this matter to you? The opera, the dissipation and whirlwind of society sweeps you along, and that is just; I do not complain; I grieve.

Nevertheless, I wish you would come here to-morrow after supper; you can then speak to M. d'Alembert, and perhaps to M. de Vaines; he sends me word that he will probably be here. I have seen M. Turgot this evening; it is more than six months since I have been tête à tête with him. I was dull, and I think he must have regretted the time he wasted on me. Good-night. I have a burning heat; fever consumes me. Ah! this death is too slow! You hastened me this morning; why retain me to-night?

Saturday, eleven at night, 1774.

How wise you were not to come to the theatre. I have no words to express the weary disgust I felt; I had, besides, a feeling of physical discomfort which was almost pain; it ended by being beyond my strength to pass my evening with Mme. de Châtillon, although I had promised her to do so.

I feel that there is a degree of unhappiness which takes from us the strength to endure ennui; it is dreadful to me to be a passive listener to trivialities, often revolting, and nearly always as stupid as they are low. Oh! the detestable play! how bourgeois the author is, what a common, limited mind! how stupid the public are! what bad taste good company can show! how I pity the unfortunate writers

who are hoping to acquire reputation from the stage! If you only knew how the audience applauded! Molière could never have had a greater success. Nothing was noble about the play except the names and the clothes; the author made Henri IV. and the Court people talk in the style of a bourgeois of Saint-Denis. It is true that he gave the same style to the peasants. In a word, this work [comedy in three acts by Collé, entitled "A Hunting party of Henri IV."] is to me a masterpiece of bad taste and platitudes; and the people in society who praise it seem to me like valets saying good of their masters.

Have you news of your mother? is she better? and is your father's return a certainty? Nothing but that can console me for your having left this faubourg. And you, *mon ami*, how have you spent your day? In not doing what you said you should, is not that so? and to-morrow you will not work; always an activity which makes a hundred plans, and an easiness in dropping them on the least pretext — regrets, desires, agitation, but never any repose. Oh! *mon ami*, you must be loved before you are known, as you were by me; for after judging you, it would be devoting one's self to hell to pin one's happiness upon you.

I will tell you my whole day to-morrow, Sunday, so that you may give me the moments that will least inconvenience you. First, mass; then a visit to a sick friend before dinner. I dine with Mme. de Châtillon; at four o'clock I go to the hôtel de La Rochefoucauld; then I shall return home about half-past six, and not go out again. Adieu, *mon ami;* I love you, but I feel too sad and too stupid to know how to tell you so.

Mon ami, may I ask you, without offence, to return me the letter of the Abbé de B . . . ? for I do not venture to reclaim the pages torn from my letters. I was wrong to notice it,

and by speaking to you about them I have roused your "indignation." That feeling is just; I dare not complain of it. Ah! I am too "difficult to please," too "exacting," too "crabbed." I have all the faults of an unhappy being who loves to desperation and who has but one emotion and one thought. Adieu again.

Midday, 1774.

You did not tell me, you did not write it, and I can prove this to you. The hope of seeing you suffices to stop and change all my arrangements; you can judge, therefore, whether, with the certainty of seeing you, I was likely to go out. But as you depend on the arrangements of Mme. de . . . , you can never foresee, or say with certainty what you will do. *Mon ami,* there is no great harm in that; misunderstandings result, but you are free, that is the important thing. I am sorry you did not let yourself be driven to where Mme. de . . . was stopping. M. de Saint-Lambert was going to the Place Vendôme — but you never know what you want to do nor where you are going. However, what does it matter? If you were amused, if you were satisfied and happy at the close of your day, you did well, you were right, and your way of life must be a good one. Change nothing. As for me, I am sad and depressed. I wish — not to change my way of feeling, but — I wish I were annihilated, I wish I had been so on that day when I ceased to be beloved. Ah! *mon Dieu,* what a loss is mine! My soul cannot accustom itself to that dreadful word *never;* it still gives me convulsions. Yesterday, during the reading, I feared I should have to go away. I remembered that the last time that reading was given *he* was present; my heart was broken. I could not listen to another word, and since that moment I have existed only on those sweet and cruel memories. *Mon ami,* why did you wrench me from death? The thought of

death is all that calms my soul; it is its need, its most permanent desire.

Good-bye; I know not how I can do it, but, to my great regret, I must control myself. The time in my life when I feel best is at night; then I am all alone with my affections. You must tell me — if you know it — what you expect to do the next few days; but in mercy make me no sacrifice. I am not worthy of it, and I should be left so unhappy.

Saturday, 1774.

Mon ami, you never know what you want to do; I am therefore going to tell you: you will go out before eleven o'clock; you will pay visits in the faubourg Saint-Honoré; then you will go and dine with Mme. de Boufflers. Returning from there, you will go and write at the house of Mme. de V . . .; at seven o'clock you will come to the Comédie Française to see "Henri IV." (which is the afterpiece); you will ask for the box of the Duc d'Aumont, over the orchestra, next to the queen; you will tell your lacquey to be, at a quarter past eight, at the great gate of the Prince's court-yard, and we will all go out that way without losing a moment; after which you will go and sup with Mme. de . . .

There is your whole day well laid out; change nothing. Then on Sunday you will work all the morning without going out; you will dine with Mme. de . . . , return home at five to work again, and at eight you will come to me. *Apply yourself*, and take my advice. Then Monday, dinner with Mme. de V. . . , supper with Mme. de . . . ; Tuesday, dinner at M. Turgot's, and supper with Mme. de . . . ; Wednesday, dinner with Mme. Geoffrin, and supper with Mme. de . . . ; Thursday, dinner with Comte de C . . . , and supper with Mme. de . . . ; Saturday, dinner with Mme. de . . . , go to Versailles after dinner, and return Sunday

evening to spend it with me. *Mon ami*, you will be the most agreeable man in society if you do what is here prescribed to you. I defy you to make a better plan for your pleasure — I make that, as in duty bound, the first object.

Mon ami, you tell me that you wish to make me suffer; that is impossible; you are kind, you have feelings, and you know — what? that I would give my life, more than that, I would vow myself to sorrow if I could thus deliver you from one quarter of an hour's pain. And yet you wish to make me suffer! Oh, it is not true!

Five o'clock, 1774.

Mon ami, you were mad this morning, but your madness was very charming because it was after my own heart. I do not know how I happened to forget to tell you the imperative reason that kept me at home. This surprises me the more as I did not remember until I saw M. de Vaines enter my room at half-past three o'clock. He had told me the evening before, and he had written it to me, yet I did not remember to tell you. *Mon ami*, I have annoyed you once, and you have hurt me a hundred times. For instance, if I do not see you to-night you will be cruel and unjust, but I shall not complain. M. Turgot is rather better; I have had news from him three times since I saw you, and I shall have more before midnight; that satisfies me without tranquillizing me.

I have seen your Lançon, the painter; he is handsome enough to be painted himself; but there is something silly, vapid, and conceited about him which cools me as to his talent. That man will never feel your soul; he may paint your features, he may find the secret of rendering a likeness, but it will be without interest to me. And yet, how could that be? have I not in my heart that which would animate

stone and make canvas living? *Mon ami,* I will not lose it; you have promised me your portrait; give it to me therefore; I want it.

I have not been out; I shall see no one who will tell me of the ball; I shall hear M. Turgot talked of, not with the interest that I feel in him, but with that which is felt for virtue, and through fear of his successor. To me he is not the controller-general; he is M. Turgot, with whom I have been intimate for seventeen years; in that light his illness troubles and agitates my soul.

Half-past ten o'clock, 1774.

I have been with two women, coughing myself to death; I could not thank you for sending me news of yourself. You do well, *mon ami,* to stay in your chimney-corner; your health and comfort are far dearer to me than my pleasure. I am sure you will accuse me of temper and injustice, and it is you who will be unjust; but I forgive you. I have for you a sentiment which is the principle, and has the effects, of all the virtues, indulgence, kindness, generosity, confidence, the yielding up of self, the abnegation of personal interest. Yes, *mon ami,* I am all that when I think you love me; but a doubt reverses my soul and puts me beside myself; and what is cruel about it is that this is almost my habitual condition.

Mon ami, the first rule for writing *en points* is to form one's letters, and, above all, be precise; *hence* you will never be able to write *en points.* But I will let you off easily in future. I feel only the need of being loved day by day; let us blot from our dictionary the word *forever.* My soul can no longer attain so far. I am a hundred years old, and I have under lock and key a cure for the future. You see I have read your points. But you, read these two pas-

sages from Seneca; they have delighted me. I wished you to see them, and I have had them copied. M. de Mora had the same sentiments; they sustained him three years at the point of death, but death was stronger than love. Good-night. I feel sad; life hurts me, and yet I love you with tenderness and passion.

Eleven o'clock, 1775.

I am alone only for a moment. For the last two hours I have been trying to finish that criticism of the Comte de La . . . For the last twelve days I have been swept away from all that interests me most in life. Ah! *mon ami*, how stupid dissipation is; how barren society is of all interest for a mind preoccupied; how few conversations there are for which it is worth the trouble to leave home! I am almost in a state of disgust with intellect; you say truly, that which enlightens only, wearies me. Ah! I am very unfortunate; what I love, what consoles me, puts my soul to the torture with trouble and remorse. I must have need to suffer, for I find myself constantly desiring that which does me harm. But, *mon ami*, it is only by thought that you can comprehend all this; and I ought not to tell it to you; in fact, I meant merely to ask you to return to me the volume of Montaigne which you put in your pocket a few days ago.

I will go and fetch you before two o'clock: do not order a carriage. *Mon ami*, there is something noble, righteous, honourable in submitting to ill-fortune. I know many rich men who go on foot for their pleasure; and many old and infirm persons who go about in the street carriages. I am very limited myself, *mon ami;* if you knew how much little details are to me, what the happiness that is bought with money would be to me! *Mon Dieu*, my present situation proves that I have utterly disdained fortune; it has no doubt its advantages, but how many things are preferable! Good-

night, *mon ami*. What are you doing at this moment? I defy you to be better employed than I; I am thinking of what I love.

Be ready before two o'clock.

Midday, 1775.

I was so chilled, so extinct last night because you came so late, and because I have seen you so little these many days, that I forgot to give you a copy of that letter of Mme. Geoffrin which you desired. Nor did I tell you that you should have a ticket for that friend you do not choose to name to me. If you are amiable, and above all reasonable, this is how you will arrange your day to-morrow: dine at the Temple, and you will there see Mme. de Boufflers; and at six o'clock you will either come here or go to the Opera (I will let you know which). I am tempted not to go and dine with Comte de Creutz, though he is to have, or flatters himself he will have, M. Boucher. I admire the latter's talent with all my soul, but the use he makes of it wearies me — diamonds, gold, rainbows, all that does not touch the sensitive portion of my being; a word from him whom I love, his *slumber* even, stirs more in me of that which feels and thinks than all M. Boucher's factitious images. *Mon ami*, I want to see you to-day; come before supper. To-morrow I will let you know if I expect you at the Opera or here.

Well, here is a settled thing: I will lend you no more manuscripts, inasmuch as you send them about; I see there is no safety with you. But in spite of your defects, you still have confidence, as you told me yesterday, in being always sought, always loved, and by a thousand more than you could, or would respond to. *Mon Dieu!* what a pity it is that, being so charming, you deserve so little to be loved! Good-bye; I am not stupid, but I am, perhaps, too truthful. I shall not

go out to-day till nine at night. I will wager that you are roving already. There are but three things of which you do not know the value, and which you consequently fling about: your time, your talent, and your money — of all things else, you are miserly.

Midday, 1775.

"Unworthy and common" conduct would be to leave you to your anger and to the opinion that I wished to affront you. *Mon ami*, know me better, and believe that I could never fear being compromised, as you say, or even betrayed. Remember that for one who does not fear death, and who, far from fearing it, has never passed twenty-four hours in the last six months without finding in herself the desire and the strength to forestall it, remember, I say, that in that frame of mind my soul can know but one species of fear, and that is derived from my tenderness for you; I fear to displease you, I fear to grieve you; but, on my honour, I fear nothing for myself; there are moments, in fact, when I should like you to reduce me to despair. See, from that, if I am likely to have those petty fears which are roused only by the dull vanity that makes people desire an esteem they do not deserve.

No, *mon ami*, I repeat it, I fear nothing in the world but my conscience; and as I cannot calm that, nor stifle my remorse, I wish to die; my sole regret in dying would be to have hurt you. From that sincere avowal you can judge of the feelings that inspire me, and see whether your soul ought to remain "ulcerated" by an emotion condemnable no doubt if it were not the effect of two maladies which consume my life and rend my heart. *Mon ami*, I have told you that you must indeed have much, ah! very much indulgence for me. Forgive me, therefore, not my intention, not my sentiment (for assuredly *they* need no pardon, unless for the excess of

passion that is in them), but forgive a fit of madness which I could not repress.

Your letter is unjust; but it does not take from me the hope of still reaching your heart. Tell me it is closed to me forever and I will thank you; for with those words you will break the sole tie that holds me to a life of regret and remorse, a life in which I can look for no other interest or pleasure than that of loving you without hope that you will share my feeling. But at least be sure that I shall never trouble your happiness or your dissipations, never ask you for a moment that you think could be better employed; you shall be free to see me but rarely, and without fearing the importunity of my reproach.

Mon ami, tell me again that you will "never" see me more; that, I believe, is the word that my soul craves to hear. Ah! no, I fear nothing, except to live; I bid all nature do its worst; I feel myself so strong, and yet so feeble, that I ask you, from the bottom of my heart, to crush me wholly or come to my assistance. Adieu, *mon ami*.

Eleven o'clock, 1775.

For the last two hours I have been waiting; at last that pamphlet has come. Remember that the "Eulogy of Reason" gave you pleasure, and do not change that opinion. *Mon ami*, in preaching moderation your zeal carries you away; there is no kind of conversation in which you do not compromise yourself without making any conversions; but as I am not more fortunate than you, I end my sermon here, and will only say that I shall be delighted to see you. Come early; remember it is eight days since I have seen you; you can imagine how charmed I was with your note. *Mon Dieu!* why do you put such warmth and interest in overcoming me and in making me feel myself inconsistent and absurd,

and, *then*, why are you all ice to my soul? Ah! why? because you are true; because if you did not love me, you would have hated me; because the real evil is that we ever met each other. But inasmuch as it is impossible to change the past, I ask you to console me to-day by coming early. Good-bye; I am talking with M. d'Anlezy while writing to you; it is not comfortable.

Midday, 1775.

Why, surely I believe that you will never take the manners or the tone of any one; all which has true grandeur can only lose by changing. Alexander, perhaps, would not have given up his stiff neck; therefore, keep all you have, *mon ami*, your taste, your levity, your manners, and, above all, your forgetfulness of whatever moves and interests those you say you love. For instance, you have a refinement of delicacy that I never observed in any one but you; you will not come and see me, you say, because not to see me alone is a restraint upon you! Truly, that is touching tenderness, especially when you are at liberty to come and see me in the mornings or at four o'clock; those are times when I am almost sure to be alone. But, *mon ami*, it is much more delicate not to come at all, and I give my consent, for I no longer wish you to make sacrifices for me, — which you have no desire to make. Your excessive interest will content itself with two words: "I suffer."

February, 1775.

They are coming to fetch me; I shall not see you, and not know whether you want me to call for you. Do you know they are giving "Tom Jones" [comic opera], with "False Magic" [the same, by Marmontel]? That will give you pleasure, and your pleasure will make mine. Therefore give this evening to Mme. . . . and come to the play with me

to-morrow. But decide; for your place has many applicants. You had the kindness to deprive me last week of two evenings on which I had counted; that wound up my soul to generosity, and it is without rancour that I give you your liberty to-night. I still feel the crisis of yesterday; I need solitude, and composure; with you I should find only trouble. Go, therefore, and pass the evening with what you love, what pleases you, and what loves you, and leave me to engulf myself, inebriate myself with a sorrow which is better than all the pleasures of those persons with whom you were last night. Yes, vice is less dangerous than those souls of papier-maché, those vacant brains. Vice revolts and makes us indignant, whereas those persons seduce you by their manners and their tone, and will extinguish forever mind soul, and talent. Ah! *mon Dieu!* do not give M. Roucher the disgust of being judged by those still-borns, or rather those living dead. They cannot understand his soul, and they will wound him by the insolence with which they will speak to him of his poverty. You would do well to tell them that with his talents a man is richer, greater, happier than any one of them. I must tell you a generosity of M. de B . . . which will give you the measure of his soul, or of what represents it. M. Turgot is to hear M. Roucher; he will feel him; he is virtuous, he will serve him without urging.

I think you do well to go to Versailles; you ought to speak once of that affair, and then say no more. Mme. Geoffrin has sent me an engraving for you. I send it that you may enjoy it all the sooner. The woman is beautiful, but cold as a Muse. Send your copy to Mme. Geoffrin; she is in a hurry. When persons are very young or very old they want to enjoy instantly. I have been very unwell today, but that is now the habit of my life; people should not

be asked to pity ills that last forever; it is enough if we ourselves are endured with them. Good-night.

Seven o'clock, 1775.

Last evening at this hour I expected you, *mon ami*, and I suffered when you did not come; to-day my soul is depressed and sad because it is not sustained by the hope of seeing you. What I feel recalls to me those verses of M. de La Harpe: —

"Ah! why can I no longer await her,
E'en though she comes not?"

Mon ami, I pity you for being unable to share the feelings that possess me; you would know happiness — the happiness which gives an idea of heaven, and conveys strength to purchase heaven by the tortures of hell. Yes, I feel it, my soul is made only for excesses: to love feebly is impossible to me; but also, if you do not respond to me, if my soul cannot compel yours to follow it, if you wish me to live a divided half, if it suffices you to be agitated and never happy, I feel a vigour still within me to renounce you wholly. *Mon ami*, you know it: each time that we feel the strength and even the desire to die, we can claim all, exact all; we do not give ourselves time to deserve, to acquire by slow means what we need to obtain at once. It is not the price of my happiness that I stake on being loved by you; it is that of my life. It would be shameful, therefore, to deceive me, and it would be generous to deprive me of all hope.

But it was not one word of all this that I wished to say when I took up my pen. See how free we are when our souls are tossed! I meant to warn you not to come to-morrow before midday, because I have just remembered I shall have a *coiffeur*. It would be odious to me to see you with that appendage, and I shall not be free from him till twelve or half-past.

Be vexed if you like, but I cannot express to you how glad I am that you went away this morning when you did; another ten minutes and I do not know what would have become of me. M. de Magallon came in, and shortly after his departure I had a violent attack of convulsions; my bodily frame can no longer sustain the emotions of my soul. This does not alarm me nor make me uneasy; I fear neither pain nor the end of pain; but, *mon ami*, explain to me what gives this strength at the height of misery. Is it that situations of despair fortify and elevate the heart? If so, we should bear our fate and make no moan.

A conversation is going on about me in which I am not tempted to take part, but it disturbs me. However dissipated you may have been to-day, whatever pleasures you may have had, I do not envy you; I have been in better company. I have been absorbed in "Catinat" [eulogy written by M. de Guibert]. I have re-read a part of it and I am more than ever charmed, — more satisfied than I can express. To a certainty, *the author will go far*. It is not enough to say that he has talent, soul, mind, genius; he has what is missing in almost all good things, that eloquence, that warmth that makes us feel before we judge. This is what enables me to praise without presumption, and approve with as much truth as if I had mind and taste. I cannot analyze or expatiate on anything, but what is fine uplifts my soul, and my judgment is right, whatever you may say. Adieu — adieu.

Ten o'clock at night, 1775.

Mon ami, how good you are, how amiable you are for wishing to compensate me for what I lost this morning. If you also knew how I waited for you, how I removed and sent away all that could trouble my pleasure, how each carriage that passed gave me hope, and then how it hurt my

soul! *Mon Dieu!* how I love you! how guilty I feel for having wounded you! No, *mon ami*, do not forgive me; punish me; add, if possible, to my pain, my regret. Extreme unhappiness puts us beside ourselves. Yes, it disorders the mind, leads it astray, makes us ill — it was all that that led me to offend you. For the last three days I have felt this misfortune only, and I think I should have died of it if you had not come to my assistance. Ah! *mon ami*, you uttered words which still make me shudder, which wring my heart: I "turned you to ice" — you had to "struggle with yourself to see me." Oh, heaven! why am I not dead before I hear such words? Tell me not that I am doomed to some day hate you. *Mon ami*, I appeal from that judgment; I make oath by you whom I love, by all that is most sacred to me, not to survive one hour that horrible emotion. I hate you! — see the passion, the tenderness that inspire my heart. Ah! if I were fated to love you no longer, on that day, O God! how sweet it would be to die! Heaven is my witness that I hold to life by you alone; and all that friends so prodigally give me of care, of kindness, friendship, interest, would not have the power to keep me till the morrow.

Mon ami, M. de Mora is ever by my side, and I see you ever. If my soul should lose from sight that succour, that support, I could not exist one hour. Ah! read my heart to its depths; you will see there more than I can tell you, and better. Can we ever express what we feel, what inspires us, what makes us breathe, what is most necessary to us, yes, more necessary than air? for I have no need to live, but I have need to love you. Ah! *mon ami*, how far away from me you are! You said yesterday that I had "begun by wounding you and ended by turning you to ice." I answer: "You had wounded me;" and I add: "You may despise me,

you may hate me, but still I shall find within me the passion with which to love you." Yes, *mon ami*, I repeat it: death is in my thoughts a score of times a day, and my soul cannot conceive the idea of loving you less. Ah! know me wholly; see within my soul the passion that consumes me and that I dare not make you see. It is not my remorse, of which I speak to you sometimes; it is not my sorrow, which I wail to you so often; *mon ami*, it is an ill which impairs my reason and my health, — an ill which renders me unjust, distrustful, which makes me utter things of which I have a horror. How could I have been so beside myself as to tell you that I had a bad opinion of you? Is that in nature? could that thought have been within my heart? Do we adore, do we pay worship to that which does not seem to us a god? *Mon ami*, my brain and soul must have been overwrought to a very high, a very rare degree, to be as guilty as I have been. *Mon Dieu!* I was loved as I love you, and by the most perfect of human beings; and now you have the force to say to me that I have never loved you, that my sentiment is hatred! Yes, it is true, I hated — but it was myself, and for the irresistible emotion that carried me away. *Mon ami*, consider the matter well, and although you have been much loved no doubt, you will find that no person ever loved you with greater strength, more tenderness, more passion, than I.

Midnight, February 6, 1775.

Well! did I not tell you so, *mon ami?* I have not seen you and I shall not see you. Ah! how sad it is to foresee correctly, and how sorrowful to show regrets to those who do not share them! I know not why I felt so keenly that you would fail me. No one but "Iphigenia" [Gluck's opera] had more company this afternoon than there was in my room; I am crushed with fatigue. First, I had begun by going to spend

an hour with M. Turgot; then another hour with Mme. de Châtillon; that made many stairs to mount, and I was tired out on getting home. I had promised to spend the evening at Saint-Joseph's [the Duchesse de Châtillon lived at the same convent as Mme. du Deffand], but I had not the strength for it. I will go to-morrow, if my visit to the Marais leaves me any courage.

Before dinner, I am going to see the automatons, which are amazing, so they say![1] When I went into society I did not have such curiosity; two or three assemblies there give satiety; but these of the rue de Cléry are better worth going to; they act and do not talk. Go and see them on your way to the Marais, where I will tell you when I can have the Duc d'Aumont's opera-box. I am to have it either to-morrow or Tuesday; I should prefer to-morrow because we shall have M. Roucher on Tuesday. But, *mon ami*, in some way *or other* I must see you to-morrow, and for long. Mme. de Châtillon does not think you guilty of negligence; she asked me to-day if your retreat would last much longer. You can easily believe that I told her it was quite absolute, that you had seen no one — for what women like is to be preferred. Few persons need to be loved, and that is fortunate. They dare to say they love, and they are calm and dissipated! that, assuredly, is fine knowledge of sentiment and passion! Poor people! we must praise them as we do the Liliputians; they are very pretty, very dainty, very nice. Adieu, *mon ami*. The confidence you showed me last night in relation to your mother's letter was very charming.

[1] The automatons were made by Jacques Droz, a young man of twenty, a native of Neufchatel, Switzerland; one figure was that of a boy seated at a table, writing; he dipped his pen in the ink and wrote whatever the spectators dictated to him. Marie Antoinette went to see them the same week as Mlle. de Lespinasse. — Fr. Ed.

Midnight, February 10, 1775.

Midnight strikes: *mon ami*, I have just been struck by a remembrance which freezes my blood. It was on the 10th of February of last year that I was intoxicated with a poison, the effects of which still last. Even at this moment it alters the circulation of my blood; it sets my heart to beating with greater violence; it recalls to it its heart-breaking regrets. Alas! by what fatality must the sentiment of the keenest, sweetest pleasure be allied to a misfortune so crushing?[1] What a dreadful conjunction! How shall I tell it, recalling that moment of horror and pleasure? I saw approaching me a young man whose eyes were filled with interest and sensibility; his face expressed sweetness and tenderness; his soul seemed agitated by passion. At the sight, I felt possessed by a sort of terror, mingled with pleasure; I dared to raise my eyes and fix them on him; I approached him; my senses and my soul froze. I saw him preceded, environed, as it were, by Sorrow in a mourning garment; she stretched out her arms; she tried to repulse me, to stop me; I felt myself drawn onward by a fatal attraction. In my trouble I said: "Who art thou? O thou who fillest my soul with so much charm and terror, such sweetness and such alarm, what tidings do you bring me?" — "Unhappy one," she said, with a sombre air and a mournful accent, "I am, and I will make thy fate; he who inspired your life has just been struck by death." Yes, *mon ami*, I heard those fatal words; they are graven on my heart; it quivers still, and it loves *you!*

In mercy, let me see you to-morrow; I am filled with sadness and trouble. Ah! *mon Dieu!* it is a year to-day, at just this hour, that M. de Mora was struck down by that mortal blow; and I, at the same moment, two hundred leagues apart

[1] Reference to the hemorrhage which attacked M. de Mora on that day. — Tr.

from him, was more cruel, more culpable than the ignorant barbarians who killed him. I die of regret; my eyes and my heart are full of tears. Adieu, *mon ami*, I ought never to have loved you.

Six o'clock in the morning, 1774.

Do you remember your last words? do you remember the condition into which you put me, and in which you believed you left me? Well, I wish to tell you that, returning quickly to myself, I *rose again*, and I saw myself, not one hair's-breadth lower than before when I stood erect, at my full height. And what will astonish you, perhaps, is that of all the impulses that have drawn me to you, the last is the only one for which I have no remorse. Do you know why? Because there is an excess in passion which justifies the soul that has equally a horror of what is vile and unworthy. In that abandonment, that last degree of abnegation of myself and of all personal interests, I proved to you that there is but one misfortune on earth that seems to me unbearable — to offend you and lose you. That fear would make me give my life: why, then, should I regret to have proved and uttered forcibly a feeling which has made me, for a year past, live and die? No, *mon ami*, in spite of your words, I do not feel humiliated; and that is because I think you honourable and myself not culpable. Do not suppose that I make to myself a false conscience, or that I seek to justify myself; no, *mon ami;* the sentiment that inspires me disdains pride and insincerity; but if you blame me, I hold myself condemned forever; your esteem is dearer to me than my own.

I am so sure of your honour, I know so well your kindness, that I am sure before you slept you promised yourself to see me to-day. I thank you for that intention; but I ask you not to see me; show delicacy and pity in this. I need to keep my soul in repose; you lead it to excesses it

has never yet known, and to which my thought alone could not attain. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how much a great happiness is to be dreaded! it has no limit and no measure. Ah! I need repose; leave me to calm myself. I shall take two grains of opium; by numbing my blood my thoughts will be dulled, my soul will sink, and perhaps I shall forget that you have not replied to my heart, that you did not say one word to comfort and reassure me throughout the whole of last evening.

Adieu, *mon ami;* do not come: and after this request, be not annoyed that my door is closed; it will be so to every one. I am so feeble that the effect of opium will numb all my faculties — but it suspends my woe; it takes away from me that portion of my being which feels and suffers. Adieu! I part myself from you for twenty-four hours. If, by a misfortune I do not wish to think of, last evening had — no, I dare not continue.

Mon ami, I see a means of repairing all; I will punish myself: I know how to suffer, and I will condemn myself to never say to you again what I now pronounce with tenderness and passion: *I love you.*

Eleven o'clock, 1775.

Judge of my trouble: I feel a mortal repugnance to opening your letter; if I did not fear to offend you I should send it back. Something tells me it will irritate my sorrow, and I wish to spare myself. The continued suffering of my body depresses my soul; I still have fever, and I have not closed my eyes; I can no more. In mercy — for pity's sake, torture no longer a life that is almost extinct; every instant of which is given over to sorrow and regret. I do not blame you; I exact nothing; you owe me nothing; for, in truth, I have not had an impulse, not a sentiment, to which I have consented; and when I did have the misfortune to yield to

them, I have always detested the strength, or the weakness, that dragged me on. You see that you owe me no gratitude, and that I have no right to reproach you. Be free, therefore; return to what you like, to what may suit you better than you think, perhaps. Leave me to my sorrow; leave me to occupy my heart, free from distraction, with the sole object that I adore, whose memory is dearer to me than all that remains on earth. *Mon Dieu!* I ought not to weep for him, I ought to follow him: it is you who oblige me to live, you who cause the torture of a being whom sorrow consumes while she employs her last remaining strength in imploring death.

Ah! you do too much, and not enough for me. As I told you last week, you make me exacting, difficult to satisfy; giving all, one needs to obtain something. But, I say it again, I pardon you, I do not hate you; and it is not from generosity that I pardon you, it is not from kindness that I do not hate you; it is because my soul is weary, it faints with fatigue. Ah! *mon ami,* leave me; never tell me again that you love me; that balm has become a poison; you soothe and tear open my wound at the same instant. Oh! how you hurt me! how heavy is life upon me! — and yet how I love you, and how grieved I should be did I fill your heart with sadness. *Mon ami,* your soul is too divided, too scattered, for true pleasure ever to enter it.

You wish that I should see you to-night? then come. The kind Condorcet has stayed with me, for I was almost dead. I have detained your messenger because Tenon [surgeon] came and interrupted me; he found that I still have fever.

February 28, eleven o'clock, 1775.

When one treasures kindness, above all when we love, we ought not to be hard to satisfy, nor yet unjust. Therefore, *mon ami,* I do not blame you, I do not complain. Ah! no,

you do no wrong; the neglect in which you left me to-day was surely involuntary; you will have blamed yourself for it, and perhaps you have had the kindness to say in your heart, "She suffers, and it is I who have caused her suffering." *Mon ami,* if your heart felt those words you are too much punished and I am too well avenged. But shall I not be happier to-morrow? shall I not dine with you? shall I not see you? I expect to go out to see M. Turgot Thursday; I have proposed to M. de Vaines to drive me to Versailles, and you too, if that will suit you. If this arrangement is not carried out, Baron Sickingen, the envoy of the Elector Palatine, has proposed to take me. M. de Condorcet and M. d'Alembert go to Versailles to-morrow; the latter is to read to M. Turgot the Eulogies. M. Roucher repeated to him to-day his poem. There are two good days for him; he can talk little and have some pleasure.

Mon ami, if you will not think me puffed up with pride, like the frog, I will tell you that M. Turgot has begged me to bring him my *précieuse* rhapsodies, and I have sent him word that on Thursday such good fortune shall not fail him. I have had news from him hourly; the Comte de Schomberg has written to me three times, always reassuringly, while telling me the truth.

I dined to-day tête à tête with a person who is unhappy, consequently, there was interest. Afterwards, at three o'clock, I went to take a turn in the Tuileries. Oh! how beautiful the gardens were! how divine the weather! the air I breathed served to calm me; I loved, I regretted, I desired, but all those feelings bore the imprint of sweetness and melancholy. Oh! *mon ami,* that way of feeling has greater charm than the ardour and throes of passion — yes, I think I am revolted by them; I will no longer love *forcibly;* I will love gently—but never feebly; you can well believe that, since it is you I love.

I returned home at half-past four and was alone till six. Do you know how I filled the time while I sat there waiting? in re-reading your letters since the 1st of January; I put them in order; thus, though not seeing you, I was vividly, tenderly occupied by you. After that came six or seven persons who devoted the rest of their Mardi-gras to me. They were tired of amusing themselves and wanted the pleasure of conversation, freedom, and repose, and we enjoyed them all — for I was still sustained by the hope of seeing you; I *hoped.* Ah! when I heard the clock strike nine I turned to stone, and my silence warned every one to leave me at half-past nine —

But I am mad, or rather imbecile, to fatigue you with a day in which you would not take an instant's part. Adieu, *mon ami;* let me know what you wish to do and can do on Thursday. I think you too much a man of society to miss the ball to-night; as for me I prefer to breathe the soft, pure air of the Tuileries, at an hour when I can be almost alone there. That is because my soul can furnish me with more than all your wit and all your talent can furnish you. Adieu.

Eleven at night, 1775.

Mon ami, the harm dates farther back. Do you remember your words, "Oh! it is not Mme. de . . . whom you have to fear, but —" and the tone with which you said it, and the silence that followed, the reticence, the resistance? What more was needed to put trouble and pain into an agitated soul? Join to that your desire to leave me, — and for whom were you so hurried? Could I calm myself? I loved you, I suffered; I blame my own folly. I went to your door this morning with sadness in my soul; I saw you, and pleasure was mingled with the melancholy that filled me. I saw the eagerness with which you endeavoured to confute me,

and I believed all that you suppose I did. I had heard you named. . . .

Well, *mon ami*, I ask your pardon for suspecting you unjustly; distrust is attached to unhappiness. How many times might I not have complained! how many times have I hidden my tears from you! Ah! I see it too plainly! we cannot retain or recover a heart led away by a new *penchant*. I tell this to myself ceaselessly; sometimes I think myself cured; then you appear before me, and all is destroyed. Reflection, resolutions, misery, all lose their force at your first word. I see no haven but death, and never did any unhappy being invoke it with more fervour.

Ah! *mon ami*, my misfortune is that you have no need to be loved as I love. One half of my soul I retain; its warmth, its emotion would importune you, extinguish you; the fire that does not warm is not wanted. Ah! if you could know, if you could read how I once made a strong, impassioned soul enjoy the pleasure of being loved! He compared it with what had loved him and loved him still; and he said to me constantly, "They are not worthy to be your scholars; your soul is warmed by the sun of Lima, and my compatriots seem born beneath the snows of Lapland." And it was from Madrid that he wrote me that! *Mon ami*, he was not praising me; he was enjoying; and I do not feel that I am praising myself when I tell you that in loving you to madness I am giving you only that which I cannot keep or withhold.

I have just been interrupted by a letter from M. de Vaines. It makes me uneasy. He tells me that M. d'Alembert must be with him before eight o'clock, and that he must bring his Eulogy on the Abbé de Saint-Pierre; adding, "This is important." I am terribly afraid they will trouble the peace of my friend. Ah! how that would grieve me; I would gladly

add to my sorrows those he may have to bear. Hatred and bigots are always on the watch. I feel an extreme impatience for to-morrow, and I know that I shall not close an eye; the more I abandon my own happiness, the dearer to me is that of my friends. I cannot express my affection for M. de Condorcet and M. d'Alembert except by saying they are identified with me; they are as necessary to me as the air I breathe; they never trouble my soul, but they fill it. In short, I would it were to-morrow morning.

But if this need, this desire, had another principle, if it were not friendship which — Ah! I should be an unworthy creature, and I should hate the very sentiment of passion. No, I could not hate it, it has lifted me this evening out of what I suffer; I have listened once more to the "Month of September" [poem by Roucher]. How fine that is! how grand it is! how sublime! But, *mon ami*, you were lacking to my pleasure; your presence renders it more keen, stronger, more profound. Ah! at all times, in all situations, my soul has need of you.

I did not get home till half-past seven o'clock; I found my friends awaiting me, among them M. Roucher, who did not go to Versailles. I wish to-morrow morning were here. I shall be at home to-morrow, for Mme. de Châtillon keeps her room, and she wants me to pass the evening with her. Ah! *mon Dieu!* my evenings are given to M. de Mora or to you; it is the part of the day that is dearest to me. If I did not fear some mistake I would send this letter by M. de Vaines' lacquey. Good-night.

Eleven o'clock at night, 1775.

Mon ami, you do not feel the need of seeing me; perhaps I have even been importunate in your thoughts. You have tried to repress a memory which came to trouble your pleas-

ure. Ah! how I pity you for not being one thing wholly, either to that which pleases you, or to that which loves you! This division takes away all the charm and delight of sentiment, and ought to distress an honourable soul. I do not blame you, I do not complain, but I grieve at my own weakness. No, my self-love does not give me strength against you: *I love you*! all personal interest is hushed by those words. But it is you, your welfare that inspires me with courage and generosity. Yes, *mon ami*, I can yield you to what you love; but by this sacrifice I ought to obtain from you a pledge that you will no longer seek to feed in my soul a sentiment which must make its despair.

Mon ami, I know it, you are no longer free to love me. Give peace to your soul, do not pass your life in reproaching yourself for what you have done; cease to make what you love uneasy, and offend no longer her who loves you, who forestalls your tastes, your desires, your will, and makes the sacrifice of you to yourself. How could I suppose that it would not cost you much to deceive me? Ah! if you have not force enough to make my happiness, at least you are honourable enough to grieve at having made my unhappiness. *Mon ami*, rely on a heart that is all yours, that beats for you only. Struggle no longer; abandon yourself to your *penchant;* the consoling thought will remain to me that I have done something for your happiness, and that despite the unnatural position in which you place me, I have done nothing to trouble it. Ah! deliver me, both from the harm I have done you and that which you do to me. *Mon ami*, be sincere, I conjure you. Say to yourself that nothing will be to me impossible; listen to the cry of your soul, and you will cease to rend mine. Yes, I can do without being loved, but it is awful, it is awful to me to doubt you,

to suspect you. Esteem me enough not to deceive me; I make oath by all that is dearest to me, by *you*, never to make you repent for having told me the truth. I shall love you for the trouble and pain you will have spared me, and never shall you hear a reproach. In losing you, I do not wish to keep the right of complaining, nor even that of touching your feelings.

Mon ami, I know you have been charmed with the Opera. Mme. d'Héricourt and the Comte de Creutz came to tell me all about it; I did not listen to them because it is from you that I want to hear the tale. Besides which, the Abbé de B . . . had just troubled me in speaking of you; he declared that he had been told I was madly attached to you; that was his expression, and he added: "No, I am not malicious; this is not a trap nor a vengeance." I was confounded; but, fortunately, at that moment the Archbishop of Toulouse was announced. What think you of that? I do not know whether I seek to reassure myself, but I think it is merely a jest of the Abbé de B . . . , to which I myself had given rise, as I will tell you some day.

I saw M. Turgot, who said he blamed himself for not having replied to you; he was much flattered by your letter. He had received a charming one from Voltaire, which said, "You will be overwhelmed with sincere congratulations, etc." I have asked the Duchesse de Luxembourg on what day Mme. de Boufflers would return; she said on Monday. I dare not flatter myself that I can dine anywhere with you to-morrow; but I cannot help wishing to do so, though the wish may be against your pleasure. If you have been to see the Comte de Broglie, *mon ami*, it is too bad of you not to give me a moment. You are the cause of my not listening with attention to the Archbishop of Aix; I was awaiting you, — how, then, could I attend to him?

I think the Abbé de B . . . was right in what he said, but wrong in saying it to me. I have seen twenty persons to-day, and not one of them was able to distract me from the need I have of seeing you. What have you done? where have you supped? have you remembered that I love you? can I say as in the opera, "The heart is for Pyrrhus, for Orestes the prayers"? Adieu; all I ask is truth; remember that you owe it to me, without subterfuge, without modification, — such, in short, as it is in your soul.

Saturday, eleven o'clock, 1775.

I did not expect this; in the depths of my soul I had the painful impression of those cruel words, "We cannot love each other;" and I responded to them, with all the strength that remained to me, "I can no longer live." *Mon ami*, all that I feel, all that I suffer is inexpressible; it seems to me impossible not to succumb; I feel the exhaustion of my bodily machine, and it seems to me I need only let myself go to die. Nevertheless, I am better to-night; I have been three hours in my bath and came out of it almost extinct, with a steady pain in the chest which has not yet left me. M. d'Anlezy and Baron de Kock have just gone away to let me answer my letter, they know not to whom. Good-night; your care, your uneasiness convince me that, in spite of your words, we *can* love each other. Till to-morrow; already I am awaiting you.

Tuesday, eleven at night, 1775.

I have refused to spend the evening with two persons who love each other, that I may talk with him I love and pass the time with more peace and pleasure than I could find in society. Others have not the power to distract my mind completely; and it does me harm to have it turned away from that which pleases me and interests me. *Mon*

ami, solitude has great charm for a mind preoccupied. Ah! how *intensely* we live when we are dead to all except the one object which is the universe of our soul, which grasps our faculties so vitally that we cannot live in other moments than the one we are in! Ah! how can you ask me to tell you if I shall love you "three months hence"? How could I, with my thoughts, divide myself from my feelings? You wish that when I see you, when your presence charms my senses and my soul, I should render you an account of the effect I shall receive from your marriage! *Mon ami*, I know nothing about it — nothing at all. If it cures me, I will tell you so, and you will be just enough not to blame me. If, on the contrary, it brings despair into my heart, I shall not complain, and I shall not suffer long. You will have feeling and delicacy enough to approve a course which will cost you mere passing regrets, and from which your new situation will soon distract you; and I assure you that that thought is a consoling one for me; I feel more at liberty.

Do not, therefore, ask me again what I shall do when you have bound your life to that of another. If I had vanity and self-love only I might be better enlightened as to what I should then experience. The calculations of self-love are never mistaken; they can foresee clearly; but passion has no future; thus, in saying to you now, "I love you," I say all that I know, all that I feel. I attach no value to that constancy commanded by reason — but oftener by those petty interests of society and vanity which I despise with all my soul. Nor do I respect that dull courage which allows us to suffer when we might prevent it, and spends its reason and its power in converting an ardent sentiment into a cold habit. All this manœuvring with one's self, all this behaviour with those we love seem to me an exercise of falseness and dissimulation, the resource of vanity and the

requirement of weakness. *Mon ami*, you will find nothing of all that in me; and this is not the result of reflection; it is the habit of my life, my character, my manner of being and feeling; in a word, it is my whole existence which renders society and constraint impossible to me.

I feel that if you had to create a disposition in me, it would not be the result of all this which would compose it; you would form me a character more analogous to the course you are going to take; it is not inflexibility and strength that are wanted in victims, but weakness and submission. Oh! *mon ami*, I am capable of all things, except bending; I should have the strength of martyrs to satisfy my passion or that of him who loved me; but I find nothing in my soul that assures me of the power to ever make the sacrifice of my feeling. Life is nothing in comparison; and you will see whether this is the talk of an excited head. Yes, perhaps these are the thoughts of an impassioned soul, but to such belong strong actions. Is it to reason, which is so cautious, so weak in its views and even so powerless in means, that such thoughts can belong? *Mon ami*, I am not reasonable, and it is perhaps because I am impassioned that all my life I have consented to the opinion and judgment of indifferent persons. How many eulogies I have usurped on my moderation, my nobility of soul, my disinterestedness, on the so-called sacrifices that I made to a dear and honoured memory and to the family of d'Albon! That is how the world judges, how it sees. Ah! good God! fools that you are, I do not merit your praises; my soul was not made for the petty interests that occupy yours: given wholly up to the happiness of loving and being loved, I needed nothing, neither strength nor honour, to enable me to bear poverty, and to disdain the deprivations of vanity. I have enjoyed so much, I have so felt the full value of life that were it to

begin again I should wish it might be under the same conditions. To love and to suffer — heaven and hell — to that I would vow myself; that is what I desire to feel; that is the climate I wish to inhabit, and not the temperate zone in which live all the fools and all the automatons by whom we are surrounded.

Mon ami, when I took this pen it was with the intention of continuing to paint *you*, and behold! with detestable selfness, I have changed my model, I have painted myself, giving way, like a lunatic, to all that stirs me — but it is through you that I do this, through the tenderest and most ardent feeling; I have therefore done well to yield to it. I do not know whether I shall send you this long chatter or give it to you — yes, I will give it to you. If I send it to you I am afraid you will tell me that you will dine with M. de Beauvau, and that would be bad.

Midnight, 1775.

Oh, what sweetness, what pleasures the soul intoxicated with passion may enjoy! *Mon ami*, I feel it, my life depends on my soul's madness; if I became calm, if I returned to reason, I should not live twenty-four hours. Do you know the first need of my soul, when it has been violently agitated by pain or pleasure? It is to write to M. de Mora; I revive him, I recall him to life, my heart rests on his, my soul pours itself into his soul; the warmth, the rapidity of my blood overcomes death, for I see him, he lives, he breathes for me, he hears me, my brain is enraptured, it wanders, to the point of having no need of illusions; *this is truth*, — yes, you yourself are not more tangible, not more present than M. de Mora has just been to me for more than an hour. O divine being! he has forgiven me, he loves me!

Mon ami, what I have just experienced is the result of the

shock my soul received this afternoon. *Mon Dieu!* one should cherish, adore a gift that seems to give one a new existence. Oh! no, I am not great enough, not strong enough to boast of this gift of Heaven; but there is in me enough sensibility and passion to enjoy it with transport. Ah! what happiness to love! Love is the one principle of all that is noble, all that is good and grand on earth. M. Roucher[1] has loved; it is passion that renders him sublime. But my heart melts with sadness when I think that that rare man, that wonder of nature, knows poverty and suffers from it for himself and others. Ah! such excess of poverty blights love; it needs a miracle to preserve the force and energy that he puts into his poems; his soul is of fire, and in no direction does he seem to be depressed by misfortune. I know not if it is weakness, but I have just melted into tears at feeling myself powerless to succour that man. Ah! if my blood could be changed to gold, his wife and he would know comfort this night. Why should I not stir the soul of Comte de C . . . ? What an employment that would be of his wealth! Ah! if M. de Mora were living, with what pleasure, what eagerness he would satisfy my heart. Yes, it is with tears of blood that one must mourn such a friend; in adoring him we pay homage to virtue.

But adieu, *mon ami*. You cannot be on the tone of my soul; you judge, and I feel. You have just been amused and enervated by pleasure; I have just been intoxicated by passion; my powers are exhausted, and I do not know where I found strength to scribble at such length. Adieu.

If you have not changed your mind, I will call for you at M. d'Argental's at five o'clock to-morrow; but, above all,

[1] Jean-Antoine Roucher, married for love, was guillotined in 1794; he wrote some touching verses to his wife just before going to the scaffold. — Fr. Ed.

mon ami, no forced compliance, no sacrifices; I do not merit them, as you very well know.

Ten o'clock, 1775.

You have fever! it grieves me. — I have just been told that some one has seen you at a miniature-painter's and that the likeness is striking. That young girl is worthy of the sacrifice you have made to her of the time required for a miniature; but your life will be hers; it is generous to give it thus in advance. I thought her charming, and well worthy of the interest she inspires in you.[1] The manner, the appearance, and the tone of her mother are equally pleasing and interesting. Yes, you will be happy: I thank you for the opportunity which enabled me to meet them. Good-night.

Eleven o'clock, 1775.

Mon ami, what have you done to me? I feel so profoundly sad, so unhappy, that this crisis of pain and discomfort must come from you. The fear that you cause me, the distrust you inspire in me, are two tortures that keep my soul forever on the rack; and that sort of torture should suffice to make me renounce your affection, or, at least, that which resembles it. I do not know what dreadful pleasure you can take in putting trouble into my soul; never do you seek to reassure me; and even in speaking the truth you do it in the tone of one who deceives. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how my soul aches! How passionately I desire to be delivered, no matter by what means, from the position in which I am! I expect, I desire, your marriage; I am like a patient doomed to an operation; he sees his cure and forgets the violent means which will procure it. *Mon ami*, deliver me from the misfortune of having loved you. It so often seems to me

[1] Mlle. de Courcelles. Mlle. de Lespinasse thought it a *mariage de convenance*, but discovered later that M. de Guibert had been in love with her for the past year. — Tr.

that there is almost nothing to do to accomplish this that I feel a sort of shame for having ever staked the whole of life upon you; but oftener still I feel myself so chained, so garotted on all sides, that I have no longer any liberty of motion. It is then that death appears to me the only resource, the only succour, that I have against you.

I meant only to tell you not to come and see me to-day, which I think was your intention. I am going to "Orpheus," and I spend the evening with Mme. de Boufflers; in the interval between the opera and supper I go to see Mme. de Châtillon, who is still ill. You would not dine in company with me to-morrow; you think that two dinners in one week is too much; Wednesday you will tell me the same thing. Very well! do what pleases you, and I shall do my best to be pleased also. Adieu.

[*After receiving your letter.*]

With what poison you revive my life! Is it a benefit to feel pleasure and happiness for one instant when no time is left to me to enjoy it? Ah! you are very cruel; you hold me to life knowing that soon I ought no longer to live for you. But, *mon ami*, I must not reproach you. You overwhelm me with praises and I deserve none; no! I must not be praised; I should be pitied for being inspired by a sentiment which could give expression to stones. How speak coldly to that we love? How not desire his happiness and fame, in preference to all that is only self? *Mon ami*, you hurt me when you praise me; do you think you comfort my soul when you flatter my vanity? *Mon Dieu!* do you not know that there is neither amends nor compensation in the whole universe for what I desire and fear? Oh! yes, you know it; for you see to the bottom of my soul; you know what fills it, what inspires it, and what renders it des-

perate. Good-bye, *mon ami;* your letter is very amiable and will help me live through this long day.

Thursday, 1775.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* your note comes from heights! Is that the tone that your happiness will make you take? In that case I shall not venture to complain; I merely wish you to know that it is not in my power to endure protection or compassion; my soul is not fashioned for such baseness; your pity would put a climax to my unhappiness; spare me the expression of it. Convince yourself that you owe me nothing, and that I exist for you no longer. It is not an effort that I ask of you, as you know; it is simply to retain with me the habits you now have taken, and to have none of these returns to commiseration which blight and abase one who is the object of it. How are you? Are you going to Versailles? Your Eulogy is in the hands of a learned man.

Eleven o'clock at night, 1775.

Yes, my friend, I have pardoned you, but as it is not from generosity, I am punished. Is it just that I should be punished by you?

Tell me news of yourself; have you taken the milk? have you bathed? in short, are you doing what you said you should do? Do you know that you have within yourself the means of curing yourself, and infallibly? This truth is beginning to be proved to my mind in a manner that sometimes frightens me. Yes, death was nothing, but you have made it terrifying to me. I turn my thoughts from a memory that freezes my blood and detaches me from you.

Mon Dieu! I did not see you; I was expecting you, the feeling was so sweet, when Prince Pignatelli arrived. His presence kills me; the sound of his voice makes me shudder from head to foot, it imbues me alternately with sensibility

and horror; in short, he agitated my soul to the point of making me forget I could have seen you. He did not leave me till ten o'clock, and since then I have been in a state of depression from which you alone could draw me.

Mon ami, have you received an answer to the charming letter you wrote yesterday morning? No matter what you say, you like better to please than to be loved. I have experience of this; you were so charming then! it seemed to me it would be sweet to you to be loved. Ah! what mistakes! and the regrets that follow them will sting me to the last breath of my life.

I received a charming present yesterday, and the manner in which it was given is so piquant and original that I want to tell you about it: "I send you these C . . . of R . . . which please you so much; keep them until they do not please you at all; I shall learn in that way how much time it takes for that which has pleased you to displease you." If that idea seems to you common, then I do not know what wit and originality are. I feel myself too dull to answer it, and yet I must thank him. Answer it for me; and what you make me say will give me precedence forever over Mme. de Sévigné; it will be the first time I have taken pleasure in usurping good opinions and decking myself with peacock's feathers. *Mon ami,* jesting apart, be witty for me. You understand it is a man who makes me this present. I have never written to him, therefore he can make no comparisons.

Good-night. You dine to-morrow with persons whom you know little; you will be very agreeable; guess why. As for me, I dine with the Duchesse de Châtillon; I shall be half dead, but that is my fault. *Mon ami,* I want my dictionary and the letter of Mme. d'Anville, and that of Mme. de Boufflers, and *all mine;* and next, I want to see you. If you wish to avoid that pernicious society, come between one and

five. I saw this afternoon at least twenty persons. Judging them severely, I think they were about on a par with those who filled your day. *Mon ami*, except on one point, let us always be reasonable and moderate if that is possible.

M. d'Alembert has just had the greatest success at the Academy. He read his "Eulogy of Bossuet." The Duc de Duras made a discourse which was much applauded as accurate, noble, simple, and delicate. I had a detachment here from the Academy. I will send to you to-morrow at eight o'clock. Sleep well, rest, calm yourself, and forget, if possible all those who suffer.

Midnight, May, 1775.

Let me know, or, if you have the strength, write me how you passed the night; I hope without fever. I have just seen, in my books, that Roman camomile does not poison; it is soothing, and they make use of it in colics; tell me if it relieved you. Marriage will do marvels for you; the solicitude of your wife, and that of those about you, will force you to take better care of your health. You enjoyed to-day the comforts of a home; it was well you could not leave them for the Opera [refers to an heroic ballet by Marmontel and Grétry]. The music had very pale colours; my friend, Grétry, ought to keep to the gentle, pleasing, feeling, lively style; surely that is enough. When a man is well-made, though short, it is dangerous and certainly ridiculous to mount on stilts; he falls on his nose and spectators laugh. You will remark that this is not in contradiction, but much in confirmation of my liking for "Zémire and Azor," "L'Ami de la Maison," and "Fausse Magie."

I received to-day two letters which have convulsed me, although they filled my soul. Imagine their dates: "Madrid, May 3, 1774, getting into my carriage to go to you," and the other: "Bordeaux, May 13, 1774, on arriving half dead;"

and I receive them one year after their dates! It seems amazing, and as if it were a warning. I answer "Yes," — and I thank Heaven for letting me live to receive these proofs of that which was the dearest, most sacred thing to me in all this universe.

You are keeping your room; therefore it will be less trouble to you to search and collect my letters. In mercy, do not refuse me that moment of attention. Be assured I shall not abuse your kindness. I expect to go out to-morrow at mid-day and return at four o'clock. I do not allow myself to wish to see you. What I wish, in preference to my own pleasure, is your happiness, your will, and even your fancy, so docile am I.

Eleven at night, May 15, 1775.

Eh! *mon Dieu!* no, I did not go to the Academy; I wanted to see you during the session, but you did not come! I saw our friends afterwards, intoxicated with pleasure; but I was sad and uneasy; you were ill, or you did not care to see me; that was what I was feeling, so that I scarcely heard what was said around me. M. d'Alembert will recount to you his success. He will tell you the keen delight he had in making the Archbishop of Toulouse applaud him with transport; the archbishop wept with joy and enthusiasm. I like such emotion; and I am certain this has been one of the happiest moments of M. d'Alembert's life. I am very glad, but by thought only, for my soul suffers, and joy can no longer enter there. *Mon ami*, you have put the last seal of sorrow upon it. But it is not of myself that I wish to speak. Tell me news of your night; was it good? I hope it may have been good. At least, have you no fever? And would you like me to see you between one and five o'clock? But do not constrain yourself to this.

One hour after midnight, 1775.

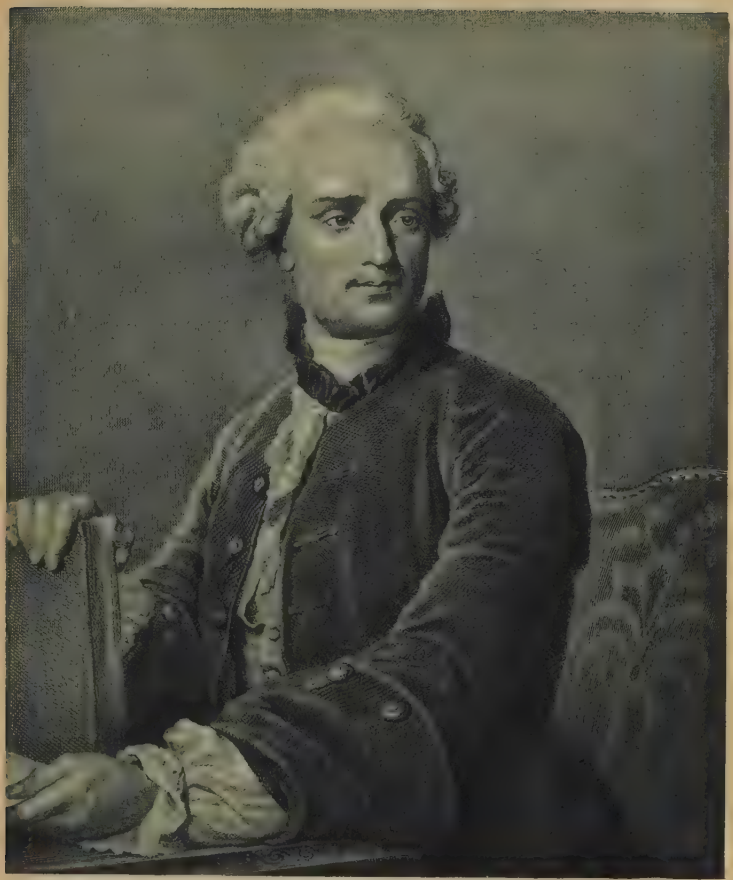
No, *mon ami*, I cannot go to sleep without making you share the esteem, respect, and enthusiasm that pervade my mind. Ah! how fine it is, how virtuous, how noble! What enthusiasm I feel for Marcus Aurelius, what esteem for his virtuous panegyrist.[1] The king absolutely must read it; I have already taken steps for that; I hope my prayer may be granted, and it is not for M. Thomas that I made it. That excellent man needs nothing more than the enjoyment his virtue brings him. You can believe that I have just written him *two words* on his Eulogy. *Mon ami*, if my death were fixed for to-morrow I should still feel the need of honouring, of cherishing talents and virtue. Think me mad if you will; this is the form of madness which inspired him whom I adored for eight years. Ah! I feel with anguish what Montaigne says: "It seems to me, when I enjoy alone, I rob him of his share."

Midnight, May 20, 1775.

So the die is cast, the verdict given! God grant it may be as surely for your happiness as it is for my fate. *Mon ami*, I cannot sustain my thought. You crush me; I must flee you to recover the calmness you have taken from me. Adieu; may you always be occupied enough and happy enough to lose even the memory of my misfortune and my tenderness. Ah! do nothing more for me; your civilities, your kind actions only irritate my sorrow; leave me to love you and die.[2]

[1] This "Eulogy on Marcus Aurelius," by Thomas, read before the Academy in 1770, was suppressed and forbidden to be printed. In May, 1775, the injunction was raised. — Fr. Ed.

[2] These letters refer to M. de Guibert's marriage. Here is how he noted down in his diary his own feelings on this occasion: "June 1, 1775. My marriage day; beginning of a new life; involuntary shudder during the ceremony; it was my liberty, my whole life that I was pledg-



Philippoteaux

D'Alembert.

Tuesday, eleven at night, May 21, 1775.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* follow your vexation, and go! I need repose, you trouble me, I feel remorse. Ah! why did I ever know you! I might have had but one sorrow, or rather I should have none. I should be delivered from a life I detest, and to which I am held by a sentiment that tortures my soul. Do you ask what have I done to-day? what have I thought? what have I felt? Alas! I did not see you; I have known only regret, sorrow, the despair of fearing you and of desiring you. Adieu; do not see me; my soul is convulsed, and you can never calm it. You know neither the tender interest that consoles and sustains, nor the kindness and truth which inspire confidence and restore peace to a deeply wounded and afflicted soul. Ah! you do me harm; what need I have never to see you more! If you do right, you will start to-morrow after dinner. I will see you in the morning, and that is enough.

Saturday, July 1, 1775.

The trouble and agitation of my ideas and of my soul deprived me long of the use of my faculties. I have experienced what Rousseau speaks of: there are situations which have neither words nor tears. I passed eight days in the convulsions of despair; I thought to die, I wished to die, it seemed to me more easy than to cease to love you. I forbade myself complaints and reproaches; I thought there was degradation in speaking of my sorrow to him who

ing. Never did so many sentiments and reflections fatigue my soul. Oh, what an abyss, what a labyrinth is the heart of man! I am lost in all the emotions of mine. But all things promise me happiness; I marry a young, pretty, gentle, sensitive woman, who loves me, whom I feel is made to be loved, whom I love already." — "From June 1 to 8. Days passed like a dream. It is a dream to me, this new state: love, friendship, candour, amiability of my young wife. Her soul develops daily to me. I love her; I shall love her; I firmly believe I shall be happy. I quit her with regret." *Voyages en France.* Paris, 1806. — Fr. Ed.

caused it voluntarily. Your pity would have humiliated me, and your indifference would have revolted my soul; in a word, to preserve some decorum it was proper to keep silence and await you.

Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought that, under these circumstances, you owed me certain cares; and, without supposing you to have much tenderness or much interest for me, I thought I ought to count on what decency and my misfortune prescribed to you. I waited, therefore. At the end of ten days' absence I received from the château de Courcelles a note which is a masterpiece of hardness and coldness. I was indignant, I felt a horror for you; but soon I felt it for myself when I considered that it was for you (forgive me), yes, for *you*, whom I saw so cruel, that I had been faithless to one who was worthy above all the world of being loved. I abhorred myself; life seemed to me no longer endurable; I was torn by hatred and remorse; and in my despair I fixed the day and moment when I would deliver myself forever from the weight that was crushing me. I gazed at death; it was the end of all my woes.

That terrible moment must surely still all passions, for from that instant I grew cold and calm. I pledged myself to open no more of your letters; to occupy my mind with what I once had loved; to employ my last days solely in adoring him whom I had lost; and then the thought of you no longer pursued me. Nevertheless, if I chanced to have a moment's sleep, I wakened with terror at the sound of your horrible words: "Live, live; I am not worthy of the evil I do you." — "No! no!" I cried, "you are not worthy to be loved." But I, I must have loved distractedly to become so faithless. You had the cruelty to bring me back to life and bind me to you — perhaps to render death more needful. Ah! how cruel you now seem to me! It would

have cost me then so little to leave you and renounce my life!

"But why die?" I said in my heart, at times turning back upon myself, and feeling how loved and surrounded I am by those who seek to make my comfort and my happiness. "Why make a man whom I hate believe that I could not live without loving him? To die would not even avenge me." I felt my soul fortifying itself as I went farther and farther from you.

In that condition of mind I was when the package came addressed to M. de Vaines. It recalled me to gentler emotions; I was obliged to open it as it contained your "Eulogy on Catinat." I know not if it was weakness or delicacy, but I told myself that, although I owe you nothing, I could not refuse my care of an affair for which you had relied upon me [the acceptance of his Eulogy by the Academy]. I thought that my resentment ought not to make me fail in an action imposed upon me by the confidence you had placed in me. It was, therefore, on moral grounds that I opened the package. I saw your open letter; I read it; it was civil, but cold; had it shown more feeling I might perhaps have combated my resolution. It did better, it confirmed me in it. I continued my efforts for your Eulogy; and I enjoyed, with a sort of pleasure, the interest it excited in me. It was not you, not my sentiment that I was gratifying; it was my pride. "I have strength enough," I said to myself, "to oblige, to do a service to him I hate, who has done me harm; and by the way I do it I am certain that he cannot feel obliged to me." That thought sustained my courage; I felt such strength against you that I re-read your letter, and far from softening my soul it made it stronger as I noted the little interest and regret you showed for me.

I judged your letter without passion; it proved to me that

I had taken the only reasonable course. I continued, therefore, to act for the success of your affair, and I have put such activity into it that I might be thought inspired by the keenest interest. Your note from Bordeaux reached me;[1] I thought that I ought not to fear its effects; on the contrary, that it would give me fresh motives to keep apart from you. I opened it hastily; it was short, and though devoid of feeling, it expressed a regret that was honourable. I was not touched, but I was calmed by it. "If he is honourable, so much the better," I said to myself; "I shall be less humiliated. My soul does not need to hate him; that feeling only tortured it. Indifference will bring me peace, and in that condition I may be able to enjoy the consolations that are offered to me. I must yield myself up to the cares of friendship; I will respond to those I have lately rebuffed; I must please them, and that occupation will turn aside the thoughts that have blasted and depressed my soul so long."

With these reflections I prescribed to myself a course of conduct to which I have been mainly faithful so far, and it answers well. I lead a more dissipated life; I give myself up to whatever presents itself; I am always surrounded by persons who love me, who cling to me, not because I am lovable, but because I am unhappy. They do me the honour to think that I am crushed by the loss I have met with; they seem to take pleasure in the effort I am making to cure myself; they are grateful for my courage; they laud me, they take pleasure in me; they lift me, so to speak, from my sorrow and never leave me a moment to myself. Yes, I see it, the greatest good, the only good, is to be loved; it is the only balm for a torn heart. — But nothing, I feel it,

[1] Eight days after his marriage M. de Guibert rejoined his regiment at Libourne, whence he made various journeys about France and Switzerland. — Fr. Ed.

nothing on earth can extinguish the sentiment which has made my whole existence during so many years.

The need of delivering myself from the torture that you have caused me will make me seek resources I have hitherto rejected. I hope, I feel, that an enlightened and resolute will has more power than I thought. A score of times I have had the impulse to separate from you, but I never was sincere with myself. I desired not to suffer more, but I never took the means to cure myself; you have now supplied me with a very powerful one, truly. Your marriage, in making me know your soul, has repelled and closed mine to you forever. Oh! no, do not think that I am following your advice and taking my pattern from the novels of Mme. Riccoboni; women whom levity leads astray may conduct themselves by the maxims and principles of novels. They are full of illusions; they think themselves gentle and generous when they are only cold, base, and contemptible; they do not love, they cannot hate; they know nothing but gallantry; their souls do not attain to the heights of love and passion, and Mme. Riccoboni herself cannot rise to them even in imagination. *Mon Dieu!* how wounded I was by the comparison you made between my sorrows and the situations in a novel! How indifferent, how little delicate you seemed! how superior to you I felt myself in being capable of a passion of which you could not even judge!

But I must end this long letter, which will put you in a position to better comprehend my actual state. I have rendered an account of all I have felt; I have done so with the same truth that I have always shown to you; and, as a part of that truth which is sacred to me, I shall not tell you that I desire your friendship, or that I have any for you; that sentiment can have no sweetness or charm unless it is founded on confidence. Adieu; allow me the feeling of

pride and of revenge which makes me find pleasure in declaring that I pardon you, and that it is no longer in your power to make me feel fear under whatever circumstances may arise.

I enclose herewith three letters which I beg you to read again; not that I wish to inspire you with regret or interest, but I desire you to remember *once* all the evils that you have caused me. I exact (and your conscience will tell you that I have the right to do so) that you return to me these letters under cover to M. de Vaines, with a double address, and by the next courier to the one by which you receive them.

Monday evening, July 3, 1775.

On the arrival of the courier on Saturday I had just written you a voluminous letter, and I did not withhold it although your letter made me change, not my way of thinking but my manner of feeling. Nevertheless, I was confounded by reading that you had only "the appearance" of being guilty towards me, and that my "unhappiness" claimed your "indulgence" — and it is *you* who utter those words! and to *me* whom your injustice has killed with grief! Ah! *mon Dieu!* where find the strength I need? My soul can no longer grasp or hold to anything. I do not hate you; I pass my life in condemning you, in suffering, in cursing the life to which you have fettered me. Ah! why did I ever know you? why did you render me so guilty? And you coldly pronounce me "unhappy"! Does nothing tell you that it is you who have made my sorrow irrevocable? and you dare to call the silence of despair a "detestable caprice"? Alas! I have loved you with such abandonment, my soul has been so raised above all interest but that of my passion, that it is inconceivable you should call "caprice" the impulse that makes me leave you. What!

you have not even the language of the feeling that inspires me? At the very moment when you seek to bring me back to you you wound my heart, you bruise my soul by your expressions. Take care lest you lack in honourable delicacy by complaining of me when I am crushed by you. It is not, you say, vexation or gratitude which inspires you, it is the tenderest of feeling. Ah! if that were true, should I be now at the summit of unhappiness?

No, you are mistaken; without sharing my feeling, without feeling the need of being loved as I love, it costs you something to renounce being the first, the sole object of an active and impassioned soul which has put, if not interest, at least emotion into your life. Yes! the most restless, the most wasted life feels a void when it ceases to be loved by a soul strong enough to suffer and tender enough to forgive. I was not so generous, or so cold, as to forgive you for the harm that rent me; but I had enough sense and reason to seek calmness in silence. My soul was so sick that I hoped its need of rest would lead me gently to indifference. I thought it not impossible that by ceasing to see you and hear you speak you would lose the power you have to lead my reason astray and convulse my soul. Ah! good God! why do you want that ascendency? what will you do with it? make it the misery of my life and the trouble of yours? It needs an excess of self-love to wish to maintain a sentiment one cannot share. You know well that my soul is without moderation; therefore it is condemning me to the tortures of the damned to wish me to occupy my thoughts with you. You ask the impossible — that I should love and that my "reason should regulate my emotions." Is that in nature? None but sentiments made with our heads can be perfect; and you know whether I can feign, or usurp, or owe the happiness of my life to a conduct not dictated by the

tenderness of my feelings or by the violence of my passion. You know, you see, that I have not even the use of my mind with the one I love.

But all this is talking too much of myself. It is of you that I wish to know all of which I have been so long in ignorance; you owe me an account of your thoughts and actions and feelings. Yes, I have a claim to that. Why did you pause in writing to me? You say that your "heart and mind are full"! to whom are you confiding yourself? Is there any one in the world who knows you better than I?

In regard to what you told me about the "Connétable," I sent at once to Maréchal de Duras, who repeats that it will be played, and that you shall have a furlough at the end of the month, after which you are to go in September to Metz to finish your term of service. He wrote you this by the last courier, and I repeat it only for my own satisfaction. So, you have "presumed too much upon my zeal"! How ungrateful you are! if *my* honour and *my* life depended on it I should not take so much trouble. There are fifteen Eulogies of Catinat sent in for competition; but only one of them makes me uneasy. I am to read that one to-morrow, and I promise to send you my opinion of it *sealed;* we shall see hereafter if it agrees or not with that of the Academy. To judge soundly, I shall eliminate *love* and *hate*, and then you will see whether I have a mind or no mind.

Have you resumed the "Gracchi"? and, though all ambition, you say, is extinct in you, do you not hope that that work will add much to your reputation? M. de Vaines will have sent you the originals of the work you did for M. Turgot. Do not think that I have forgotten the memorial of M. Du . . .; I sent it immediately; and I wrote

about it with more interest than I ever put into my own affairs and fortunes. I requested them not to reply to me at once; because it is only refusals that are prompt. So, *Monsieur*, I think that I *shall be* one of your friends; and that thought does not allow me to omit anything that may bring success.

If you were not the most agreeable man in the world how ridiculous you would be! Your letter is a mixture of confidence in my feelings and distrust that I "have ever loved you," which is too amusing. The tone is so polite, and then it is so confident! I do not know whether you love me, but you are almost as inconsistent as myself; am I alluring you on? If you only knew all that my silence has made you lose! I do not mean by that proofs of my tenderness; but your curiosity would have been so entertained, so interested! I have seen much and many things since your departure! I said to myself: "How full of life and interest all this would be to me if I could communicate it to him; but now that I must speak to him no longer, it is not worth while to pay attention to it." In fact, I withdrew into my own soul, where I found bad company, — remorse, regrets, hatred, pride, and all that can give one a horror of life.

Oh! a word escaped me in writing to tell you that your Eulogy was admitted to competition, — a word for which I have blamed myself very much. How can we call "mon ami" that which we hate the most on earth? What reminiscence could have led me to use that word? it is inconceivable. Can it be that this hatred is the first link in the chain that does not leave an instant's freedom to those who have been subjugated against their will? Ah! you have not enough *intelligence* to conceive all that one suffers in seriously loving a man who deserves only the love of women whose vanity he flatters and whose

soul he never fills. That is how they love, that is what they say, those agreeable people; and I do not know how it is that with so much that is agreeable on both sides one should, nevertheless, be wearied to death in the midst of them. *Mon ami*, yes, *mon ami*, dearest to my heart, let us not quarrel; let us forgive each other; we have both good reason to be indulgent; but remember that I am very ill, and very unhappy; if, indeed, you wish me to live, help me, sustain me, make me forget the harm you have done me. Answer me. Adieu, adieu. Are you not weary of this?

Tuesday, July 4, 1775.

I am very sorry; but, *mon ami*, why do you ask the *impossible?* Give me opportunity to be useful to you in whatever you think right, and I will answer that the thing shall be done, and without my mingling in it; you have only to speak. . . .

I have that Eulogy on Catinat and I am going to read it. *Mon Dieu!* how passion relaxes morality! Here am I, in gratitude for the mark of confidence shown me by the author [probably La Harpe, whose Eulogy was in the competition], here am I desiring that his work may be good, but *only* to the degree that allows of no doubt between his and yours. *Mon ami*, I will tell you about it truly, but I will not answer that what I say is the truth; you know well that I have no taste and very little common-sense; therefore you must judge of my judgment as it deserves. Good-bye; if I have no letter to-morrow, justice is not to be expected of you.

July 6, 1775.

I had no news of you yesterday, *mon ami*. You have wearied of speaking, and I have too soon wearied of silence; with a little more courage, so much pain and so many efforts

would not have been thrown away. Tell me, if you can, how this torture is to end. Will it be hatred, indifference, or death that shall deliver me? *Mon ami;* I do not wish to be generous by halves; I believe that I have forgiven you; therefore I am going to talk with you as if you satisfied me.

I will tell you first something that will shortly be made public. M. de Malesherbes is to have all the offices of the Duc de La Vrillières; the latter sends in his resignation in a few days; he has still to attend an assembly of the clergy, which ought to be worth twenty thousand francs to him. M. de Malesherbes resigns his position in the Cour des Aides, and M. Barentin takes his place. If you only knew how much honour and simplicity M. de Malesherbes has put into accepting this place you would double your esteem, liking, and veneration for that excellent man. Oh! you may be sure that the right will be done, and done well, because ideas will now be guided by virtue and love of the public welfare. Never, no never were two more virtuous, enlightened, disinterested, energetic men united and inspired more powerfully by a great and lofty purpose. You will see; their ministry will leave a deep trace in the minds of men. All that I am now telling you is still a secret. This choice will be joyfully received by the public; some men will be furious, but they will hold their tongues. The intriguers will have but little chance, and that is very touching. Oh! what bad times for courtiers and knaves! Am I not over scrupulous in making that distinction? — that is called splitting hairs.

Now listen to me and tremble, for I am about to judge the two Eulogies of Catinat, the only two, I imagine, which will occupy the attention of the Academy. The authors of these two Eulogies are M. de Guibert and M. de La Harpe.

M. de Guibert is the author of an excellent work on tactics, and one tragedy: those two works have made him known as a man of talents and intellect, and they show on all sides an elevated soul, full of energy. It is from this knowledge and the prepossession it inspires for M. de Guibert that I have read and judged his Eulogy of Catinat. You know M. de La Harpe better than I do; you know him to be an excellent literary writer, with much intellect, and, especially the purest and most enlightened taste. This is the justice I did him before I read his Eulogy of Catinat. Now listen to what blind presumption, silly and stupid, dares to say, and see if you will be angry, or whether you will simply choose to disdain this *judgment*: —

M. de La Harpe's Eulogy is written with his usual facility, but with a correctness which he spared himself until he found that he had M. de Guibert for rival. His style is easy and elevated; it is so rare to unite those two merits, at least to such a point, that it seems to me we may say that he writes in prose as Racine wrote in verse. This work is that of a man of letters whose mind is accurate and wise, and whose soul is gentle, honest, and lofty. There are many happy expressions, touching remarks, refined ideas expressed both clearly and nobly; but it is the work of an excellent writer, a man of great intelligence only. That of M. de Guibert seems to me the work of a superior man, who has more than talent; he has genius. Neither of the two is a philosopher: one, because he does not think coolly enough; the other, because he does not think deeply enough; but the soul of M. de Guibert judges men and events with such loftiness and energy that we prefer being carried away by him to being enlightened by a wise man. The military part is so well treated by M. de Guibert that the most ignorant fancy themselves, as they read it, competent to appre-

ciate the merits of Catinat. That part of M. de La Harpe's work is obscure, laboured, and very wearisome. In reading M. de La Harpe we are agreeably occupied, and sometimes moved; we esteem the talent of the author. In reading M. de Guibert I feel my soul enlarge, strengthen itself, take on new energy, new activity; but sometimes he is unequal; his style is not always sufficiently clear and concise; at times it lacks harmony, and we find certain rash expressions. If the prize is given to the art of writing, to eloquence of style, to the best-constructed work, it should crown, I think, M. de La Harpe. But if it is given to eloquence of soul, to force and elevation of genius, to the work which will produce the greatest effect, then M. de Guibert must be crowned. If I knew neither of the authors, I should spend my life in desiring to be, or regretting that I was not, the friend of M. de Guibert, and I should simply inform myself whether M. de La Harpe lived in Paris.

Mon ami, I am dying of impatience to have you within reach of judging my judgment. I ask your word of honour that you will show it to no one, not even to the one who is dearest to you. I do not want to have the annoyances or the "fame" which the Eulogies of La Fontaine caused me. *Mon ami,* I have neither vanity nor pretension with you; it suits me to be stupid, and I let myself go; and with others I have ceased to make efforts; I have no longer the strength. I do not talk with them. I content myself by saying, "That is good, that is poor, that is bad," and I take good care to give no reasons; certainly to do so would tire me as much as it would weary them. And what matters having intellect with those who cannot go to my soul? My soul is still stung by misfortune, but it has no warmth; I have lost that which warmed me, enlightened me, uplifted me; only memories remain that are swathed in crape. Oh, *mon ami,* M. de

Mora is no more, and you prevented me from following him! by what fatality did I inspire in you an interest that has become to me so disastrous?

Friday, July 7.

I forgot to tell you that M. de Sartine enters the Council; this is done to console him. I told you some days ago that I was surrounded by friends, but for the last two days desertion is complete: inspections, regiments, estates, and baths have carried them all away. The Neapolitan ambassador [Caraccioli] remains to me, and I see him daily; but he is too gay for me; he thwarts my inclinations. M. de Condorcet has returned. After long conferences with his dear uncle it is agreed that M. de Condorcet shall marry — when he wishes it. That sort of tyranny is bearable. He agreed, also, to be presented to the king, and to put his lacquey into mourning because the head of the elder branch of his family has died; and after these conditions and promises he took leave of his uncle, who consoles himself for having a nephew in the Academy because he finds he is also the intimate friend of a minister. *Mon Dieu!* what nonsense! it makes one groan when it does not make one laugh.

Mon ami, I will tell you some day about an anger into which I let myself fall. I said hard things, insulting things; I made myself enemies — but no matter! I satisfied myself. It seemed to me it was the height of injustice and insolence to venture to condemn you. I want the exclusive privilege of thinking ill of you. I want others to judge you as I feel you — noble, grand, elevated — and that no one shall call you "an agreeable man." Ah! what silly praise that is! how destructive of true merit! "He is agreeable." That means, when persons in society say it, "He is frivolous, light-minded, and without character." Those are the "agreeable people" of

this nation! But we are getting better. I am convinced of that. Adieu, *mon ami.*

You will laugh at me for having kept from you a secret about which everybody will be writing to you. But if you have not become too *provincial,* you must know that three days may be of great importance in a secret of this nature. Besides, I promised; and morality ought not to reason.

I have a great curiosity; I should like to see a letter from . . . But new duties impose, no doubt, a withdrawal of confidences; well, so be it! I hope I shall have letters from you to-morrow. The tone will be very curt, very cold; that will displease me, and perhaps to such a degree that I shall regret my return to you. I ought to have written to you "You are *not* worthy of the harm you have done me;" those words uncover the depths of my heart, and cast a light on ten years backward; that was what Clarissa said, in dying, to Belfort, the friend of Lovelace, and that thought made her find death consoling and necessary. But adieu. Richardson knew mankind, love, and the passions. Mme. Riccoboni knows only self-love, pride, sometimes sensibility, and that is all.

Monday, July 10, 1775.

Ah! how unfortunate I am! how ill-timed, how mistaken! Good God, what an error I have fallen into! You write me, with more scruple than feeling, that it would have sufficed you to receive "a sheet of blank paper;" and, alas! it was my misfortune, when you announced to me your will, to be led into writing you all I thought, all I felt. I suffered, my soul was wearied out; it turned to him who had wounded it. Oh! *mon ami,* when you receive that letter you will not understand it; you will answer me ill, and I shall hate you with all the more force because I have exposed to you my weakness. Cease to torment me; you do too much and too

little; let the feelings you did not want and cannot share die out. My God! I was cured if it were not for that cursed "Eulogy of Catinat." I should have stayed where that infamous note from the Château de Courcelles (the recollection of which makes me quiver with anger) placed me. I should never have read another word from you, and in that deep silence I could have gained the strength to cure myself or die. *Mon ami*, you are very guilty; for you are making in cold blood the despair of my life. After telling me that you know I suffer, you add that you "have need to live in the country, and that inclination will last long." You desire to go and live in the country; you have no desire to see me. If that is so, why tell it to me. You should be silent on that which is likely to hurt my soul; yes, you *should be*, for do not think there is but one sort of duty. It may be so for those coarse, vain souls who attach the idea of happiness only to money and the approbation of the fools about them; but with you, it is to your conscience that I appeal, and it is mine that will judge you when my passion is silent. Ah! why did my heart abandon itself to you; why do I love you when I have such strong reasons not to love you — and not, like the majority of women, from silly vanity or the dull want of occupation? As to a void or want of occupation, I know it not; my soul could be occupied a hundred years with what I have loved and what I have lost, and my life could be full of a thousand interests, if I chose. But I repulse, I push away incessantly all that attempts to reach my soul.

Thus, you see, it is by some special fatality that I am condemned to the torture that is killing me, and you, you make yourself a cold spectator of it! You have grown so used to the spectacle that "a sheet of blank paper" would have replied to all you thought and felt for me, and alas! I had

written you volumes! Think what the folly and awkwardness of my conduct has been! I am confounded by it. . . .

I have never mentioned to you that ring which you gave me at parting. I put it on my finger and two hours later it was broken, — the symbol and emblem of what was to follow; This is not a jest; it was the saddest of omens to me. Give me another ring, strong and durable as my own sentiment; that which you gave me resembled yours, it held by a hair.

You say you "no longer love anything but study." And yet you disdain fame. In truth you are a great philosopher when you are sad; but this winter you will be so happy, so rich, so gay, so dissipated, that there will be no talk then of your profound philosophy. Ah! no, your life is not so advanced; your head is still too young; it needs to be purged of many things that lead your soul astray. *Mon ami,* I am very impertinent, am I not? I criticise you ceaselessly, but I love you better than those who praise you. M. d'Alembert loves you as if I consented to it. Adieu; write me and often.

Saturday evening, July 15, 1775.

Mon ami, I live, I shall live, I shall see you again! and whatever fate is in store for me I shall still have a moment's pleasure before I die. I did not say so to myself this morning; I expected my doom; I believed it fatal, and I was ready to meet it; I would not complain, I could not suffer longer, and I felt that this day would be the last of my life if you did not come to my succour. You did come, *mon ami,* your heart heard me, you answered me, and life became bearable.

I had a paroxysm of despair this morning. M. d'Alembert was frightened, and I did not have presence of mind enough to calm him. His interest in me wrung my heart, it relaxed my soul, it made me burst into tears; I could not speak, but

he says that in my wildness I repeated twice, "I am dying go away." He wept and he wished to fetch my friends; he said: "How grieved I am that M. de Guibert is not here; he alone can soothe your sorrow; since his departure you have given yourself up to it."

Oh! *mon ami,* your name brought me to my senses; I felt that I must calm myself and restore to life and peace of mind that excellent man. I made an effort and told him that an attack of nerves was added to my habitual suffering. This was true, for one hand and arm were twisted and contracted. I took an anodyne. M. d'Alembert had sent for a doctor; to deliver myself from all that, I summoned what remained to me of strength and reason and locked myself into my room to await the postman.

He came; I had two letters from you; my hands trembled so that I could not hold nor open them. Ah! for my joy the first words I read were, "*Mon amie.*" My soul, my lips, my life hung on that paper; I could read no more; I distinguished nothing but stray words here and there; I read: "You restore me to life, I breathe again." Oh! *mon ami,* it is you who gave life to me; I should have died if you did not love me. Never, no never did I experience so *true* a feeling.

At last I read, re-read, ten times, twenty times, the words that poured consolation into my heart. *Mon ami,* in returning to me you bind me once more to life; yes, I feel it, I love you more than happiness or pleasure. I can live deprived of both; I shall love you, and when that does not suffice, it will be time to die. Yes, we shall be virtuous; I will answer for it; your happiness, your duty are sacred to me. I should feel a horror if I found in me one emotion that could trouble them. Ah! my God! if I could have a single thought that wounded virtue, you would make me shudder. No, my

friend, you will have nothing with which to reproach yourself; I alone shall be culpable; I shall be consumed with remorse and regrets, but, if you are happy, I will silence forever all that might give you an idea of my sorrow.

Mon ami, you know passion; you know the force it gives to the soul it possesses. Well, I pledge myself to join to that force all the strength that love of virtue and contempt for death can give, that I may never offend against your peace or against your duties. I have consulted my own self thoroughly; if you love me, I have the strength of the martyrs; but if I came to doubt you, no strength would remain to me but that which is needed to deliver one's self of an intolerable burden; it would not fail me; I had it this morning. You think that there is no degree of passion beyond that which I have shown you. I answer that you know not everything, that you see not everything, and that there are no words to express the force of a passion which feeds itself on tears and remorse, and desires but two things: to love, or to die. There is nothing of that in books, *mon ami;* I spent with you a certain evening which would seem exaggerated if read on the pages of Prévost, the man who has best known all that passion has of sweet and terrible.

I have not yet received the packet of my letters; I shall not feel easy till I hold it in my hand; I cannot protect myself against the fear that you have made some mistake; you were so hurried — but I believe that I will not reproach you; divine if that is generosity. *Mon ami*, a thing has happened which would, formerly, have upset me. Mme. du Deffand has done me a treacherous action: she has mixed me up in that quarrel between Mme. Necker and Mme. de Marchais; she has compromised me with Mme.

d'Anville; and it is all even more absurd than malignant; there must be explanations. M. d'Angevilliers has also a part in this infernal play; the Neapolitan ambassador takes much interest in it; M. d'Alembert is furious; and I, in the midst of it all, am calm as innocence, and cold as indifference. Yesterday my friends were trying to excite me about it; but I answered, "It will all come right," and they admired my coolness in the midst of the storm. Ah! that was because I had one of another kind ready to burst upon my head; there was nothing on earth so important to me as the arrival of the courier from Bordeaux. Ah! *mon Dieu!* I can defy all the furies of hell when I am content with you. There is the advantage, the cruel advantage, of misfortune: it kills the little griefs that agitate the lives of people in society. I feel that I shall come safely out of this turmoil because I put neither heat nor interest into it. I blame myself, however, for telling you so much about it; but if you were here you would hear far more; this affair has taken the place of that of M. de. Guignes.

The chevalier has brought me news of you. You tell me that you keep in your heart the "insults," the "horrors" that I have said to you. Well, what will you do with them? You know that I annulled them all; I live, and I love you; that is what remains of my despair and my hatred. You say you are "collecting your reason" to answer me: you need not do so; and I, I am so reasonable, when my paroxysms of madness are calmed, that in truth it would be too wasteful to use your reason and your arguments on me: nevertheless, I await them with impatience. Oh! how far Saturday is from Wednesday! "how for the sad the hours slowly fly!"

Good-night, *mon ami.* I will end this volume another day, for it cannot go till Tuesday. I have been ill three days; I was on the rack, but you have cured me.

Thursday, July 24, 1775.

Mon ami, I should like to seek you and meet you everywhere, talk to you incessantly, see you, and listen to you always. I wrote to you at Bordeaux, at Montauban, and again to-day at Bordeaux; and all perhaps uselessly, for if you are to be here on the 1st you must have started on the 26th. So much the better. You will not get my letters, but I shall see you, and I cannot bring myself to believe that that pleasure will only hurt me: you are so gentle, so sensible, so amiable that perhaps I shall feel that only.

But why did I have no letter from you by the last courier? is it that time was always lacking to come to the help of one who suffers? Oh, yes, I suffer, suffer much; I have internal organs that do their best to distract me from the ills of my soul. Yesterday I had frightful pains; I spent the morning in my bath and I obtained a little relief. *Mon ami,* come soon — and yet I shall seldom see you; a wife, a tragedy to put upon the stage, your duties; what will remain for a poor thing who lives only to love and suffer? Yes! I feel it, I am condemned to love you so long as I shall breathe. When my forces are exhausted by grief, then I love you with tenderness; when I am inspired, when my soul has its spring, then I love you with passion. *Mon ami,* the last breath of my life will be still the expression of my feeling. Adieu. If you read this letter, answer it, and do not fancy you will get here sooner than a letter. *Mon ami,* be careful not to come to me the first time when I have company. Adieu, adieu; I love you, and I believe it is because I have loved you.

Tuesday, August 1, 1775.

Mon ami, I have just finished Catinat; I had never so well understood it, so felt it. I cannot doubt that the Academy will feel its value: those that compete may be

good, but they will be at a great distance. You alarm me for the others whom I know; but I do not wish to discourage them.

So then, *mon ami*, you have found nothing to say in reply to me? But, at any rate, bring back to me my foolish writings; if necessary, I will make you a commentary this evening on that text. I shall see you this morning; perhaps you will be amiable enough to come early this evening. It must be owned that the dead have no such days. Good-bye. I said yesterday words that stopped the circulation of my blood; I said I desired your departure, which was as if I had said, "I would I were dead" — but that is true often. So you found it very embarrassing to answer me; let it be; I know a secret to remove that embarrassment, to make myself beloved, yes, beloved, and with energy; but we must not come to the grand means before the last possible moment. Return my book immediately.

August 16, 1775.

I am so much in the habit of suffering and of feeling only pain, that I doubt if I could have been keenly alive to the pleasure of seeing your Eulogy crowned by the Academy.[1] It would have seemed to me simple justice, and I think I should merely have enjoyed what might have been flattering in that success to your vanity. But I own that I feel and I resent, too warmly perhaps, the affront of seeing you subjected to formulas invented by pedants for the encouragement and reward of school-boys. One *accessit* [extra prize] would have been a shocking stupidity, but two *accessits* seem to me an offensive impertinence, and it does not matter what modification or distinction they may give to it on the

[1] The Eulogy of La Harpe was crowned; that of the Abbé d'Espagnac took the second prize; M. de Guibert a third. — Fr. Ed.

day of the public session. If Voltaire had competed and they had given you a secondary place, that would have been simple enough; but to be in the suite of M. de La Harpe, and beside a young abbé only twenty years old, disgusts me to a degree that I cannot express, but which I cannot restrain. It wounds my pride; it makes me unjust; for it pushes my soul into dislike of him who is preferred to you. Be more temperate than I am, if you can; that will be honourable and generous in you; and perhaps you will find in the consciousness of your talents and in a sense of your strength the wherewithal to disdain that *accessit*. All the academies in the universe cannot make you descend from the place to which Nature raised you. I know all that; I say it to myself; but I feel such disgust, and I am so close to it, that what I suffer goes far beyond what I think. . . . I want to see you, and talk over with you the course you will take in regard to printing the Eulogy. My advice would be that it should be given to the public before that of M. de La Harpe, which will not be read till the 25th or printed before the 28th or 30th. This opinion is not dictated by reflection, but you can see if it agrees with yours.

I have no right to be severe; but I shall always feel a shock when you fail in friendship; and you have wounded me in not yielding to the request I made to you, which I felt sure would be granted. You ought to have no further curiosity, or interest in the expression of my affection; it has been so well known to you; you repulsed it so cruelly in the days when you exacted the most proof of it that I am forced to think the value you now appear to put upon it is only an effect of your scruples, and perhaps a means of stifling your conscience, which tells you, louder than I have ever done, that you have abused my misfortune while seeming to wish to soften it. Have virtue enough to save me from the

last degree of humiliation, that of becoming an object of your pity: for it is nothing else than that which is now bringing you back to me; and I confess to you that, in spite of the invincible attraction which draws me to you, that thought revolts every faculty of my soul. What! I, who have been loved by M. de Mora, I, who was the object of the passion of that noblest, strongest, and most virtuous soul, shall I be humiliated by you? Ah! leave me to my remorse; it annihilates me. I am culpable, I am punished; M. de Mora is avenged. What more do you want? To crush me, to sink me beneath your pity? I declare to you that I do not feel myself born for that abject position; you hasten my death.

I cannot yet see clearly whether it is to my love that I still cling, or whether I am held back by the horror I feel at causing the unhappiness of two persons who would give their lives for me. My death would overwhelm them; I am not mistaken as to that; I would that I could detach them, remove them from me; I should be freer; I could deliver myself from the torture that is killing me, and you from the necessity of seeing me or avoiding me.

I ought to tell you, in the interests of truth and justice, that MM. Suard, Armand, and d'Alembert did the impossible to spare you that *accessit;* but ten Academicians carried the day against them, and these men had the custom and statutes of the Academy to support them. They decided that on the day of the public session they would speak in the highest praise of your excellent work; three of them voted to split the prize. That is enough said; I wish never to speak of it again, except once to you.

August 28, eleven at night, 1775.

"The mind is always the dupe of the heart."

How true that is, how correct, when we have to do with the man most open, most susceptible to all impressions. That is what my experience tells me, and my heart, in a low voice, denies it; it says, "He will return," and all that is within me, repeats, "I shall see him." Oh! *mon ami*, you do not deserve the struggles I go through; you do not deserve the sacrifice I have made to you, not only of my life, but of my death; above all, you do not deserve the trouble, the annoyances, the obstacles that my affection for you has brought into the most critical situation of my life: and that affection, that fatality will have more to say; whatever course I take it must be filled by regret and repentance. Oh! my God! my life is weary; it has been too full; nature isolated me; I was born for obscurity and repose, and I have been a prey to all the passions! I have known all misfortunes. Ah! if I had not loved M. de Mora, what evil I should say of life!

Mon ami, I meant to have said but one word, and, in spite of myself, my soul pours itself out in search of yours; the habit of being loved still deludes me; I turn to you, and it is not he — ah no! it is not he! My God! what memories! They extinguish me, they desolate me!

Will you come to-morrow, Tuesday, to the Salon of pictures, at a quarter past one? I will not make it a point of honour with you, but I must say that you alone will not be punctual at the rendezvous. What folly to go and engage yourself to dine with Comte de Creutz on Wednesday in preference to Mme. Geoffrin! — *Mon ami*, although you disparage all that I experience, all that I love, tell me if you do not think the following way of saying a thing very charm-

ing: some one said to me, in asking news of M. de Saint Chamans, "You know how I love him with your heart and my own." That is better than Mme. de Sévigné's phrase about her daughter's chest. ["I have pain in your chest."] You have six letters of mine to return, counting this one. I must have the six if you wish me to say four words to you to-morrow. I urge myself to say three now, which you hear too often — I l. .. y. . , but less; yes, *less*, I am certain of it.

"We always like those who admire us;" I really have wit to-night, for that is La Rochefoucauld's. Good-night. I wish I knew the secret of your vanity; in return you should have that of my love. Ah! but you know it; what matters all the rest?

Tuesday, August 29, 1775.

So you do not care whether you are written to, inasmuch as you do not point out the way? but, as I am very ingenuous in one direction I have charged one of M. Turgot's valets to look for you everywhere and find you somewhere. Do not forget to send me word how many seats there are in the box you intend for me [at the representation of his play, the "Connétable de Bourbon," before the Court at Versailles].

Believe if you can, tell yourself that the truth is not probable, but it is, nevertheless, certain that I have been a great deal with your wife to-day; I went forward to meet her, I spoke to her of her health, of her talents, of all that was there before our eyes in the Salon; in short, I venture to answer for it that you will hear I am "very amiable" and you will not believe it. But do you know what I really am, and to what you must accustom yourself to think of me? I am the sister of the wife of Grandison. I am becoming so perfect that it frightens me; I think I must be a swan — her death-song, they say, is perfect. Well, that is some-

thing: you will say, "She died at the wrong time — what a pity!"

Mon ami, I have a grief; one of my friends is very ill, very unhappy. I spent two hours with him last evening; I wept with him and I felt I calmed and consoled him a little. Alas! it is but too true that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness."

Ten o'clock, 1775.

It is not pride or self-love which rejects your pardon; it is a most true and tender sentiment, which assures me that I cannot have offended you. Reflect that if — by impossibility — I could have a bad opinion of you, I should be forced to despise myself forever. Rely, therefore, not on your virtues, not on my justice, but on all the kinds of love that stir the hearts of men. If I hated you I should still esteem you; therefore, all things forbid you to suspect that I can cease to respect you; that is the strongest of my feelings; that is the basis of them all, the excuse for them, if there be need of that. In that moment when you wounded me most, when I renounced you, I still esteemed you; and of all the letters I have ever written to you, there is not one in which my sorrow, my wrong, my weakness were stated, avowed, and blamed with greater simplicity and truth than in that letter of which you now speak to me. If this is not my confession of faith as to my esteem, my confidence, my perfect trust in your integrity, then dictate to me another, and I will sign it with my blood.

You have not seen me because the day is only twelve hours long, and you have pleasures and interests enough that are, and ought to be, dearer than my griefs, to fill those hours. I claim nothing, I exact nothing, and I tell myself incessantly that the source of my happiness and my pleasure is lost forever.

No, I shall not go to see the "Connétable;" I can no longer judge or enjoy such things. I shall take the keenest interest in your success and be crowned by it.

August 26, two o'clock, 1775.

A thousand thanks to you, *mon ami*. You are kind to have persevered in getting me this box. I did not receive the tickets until nine o'clock this morning, and I fear you were importuned by the sending of a courier; who was sent because those ladies were much alarmed at not having received the box by midnight yesterday. But, *mon ami*, you are not so kind, you are even unjust when you say that I "like to give you pain." Ah! *bon Dieu!* what a strange sort of pleasure that would be! If you call telling you the truth liking to give you pain, then it would be useless to love or to be loved; it would be odious to be in intimacy what we are in society, masked forever. *Mon ami*, at five o'clock, when the "Connétable" begins, I shall do like some prophet, I forget which, who raised his arms to heaven while Joshua fought. Oh, yes! my thought, my soul will be with you; no matter, after that, where my person is. I shall be lying on a sofa at the Marquise de Saint-Chamans', who is still very ill, and who has sent all her children to the "Connétable." *Mon ami*, I do hope you will come back from Versailles this evening.

Of three dinners, which will you choose? to-morrow at the Duchesse d'Anville's; Monday with the Comte de Creutz [Swedish minister]; Tuesday with M. de Vaines. I did not close my eyes all night, and I suffered much in my stomach; but I am less unhappy than for the last two days. *Mon Dieu!* how sick at heart I have been! I had a rush of despair which lasted sixty hours; I saw no one

during that time, not even those who, I was very sure, would have pleasure in seeing me. *Mon ami*, I love you, but it is with so much distress and so little confidence, that, in truth, my feeling is nearly always a great ill; formerly I felt it to be always a great pleasure.

Good-bye; if you are at the height of glory, tell me; if you are not satisfied, tell me still; it is to me it should be told, because what is you is more I than I myself. Adieu.

August 26, half-past eleven at night.

I say like Blue Beard: "Sister Anne, sister Anne, do you see no one coming?" M. d'Alembert does not come [back from Versailles]. I do not want details, but before I sleep I must hear these words: "Never was there so great a success." When I have heard those sweet words I shall sing the song of Simeon. Yes! it would be sweet to me, sweeter than ever, to sleep this night the eternal sleep.

Mon Dieu! how vexed with myself I am. They had offered to send me a courier, and then a second courier to let me know in duplicate: "Great success" or "Middling success." I refused that mark of kindness; I did not wish to be under the obligation. In short, I was silly, and I am famished; but I feared also that this anxiety would show too profound an interest. I judged right, and I am satisfied with myself in that respect. Oh! what happiness! and, as the Neapolitan ambassador says, "what joy in the home." *Mon ami*, you will never have as much as I wish you; you will never feel it with as much transport as I wish it. — Ah! here comes M. d'Alembert! "Success has passed all bounds" — that scene in the third act, the finest on the stage, was much applauded.

Adieu, *mon ami;* you will think me mad, but the first

wish of my heart is — not to see you, but that you shall see that which can make you enjoy your happiness, especially those who have shared it. Do not see me for a few days; enjoy — and do not cast your eyes on an object you ought never to have seen. I only ask you for one hour before your departure. I am well used to farewells.

Sunday, September 17, 1775.

Ah, no! I am not happy enough, nor unhappy enough to "make gall and poison" of what you say. You have settled things plainly; with a word you have chilled my soul and you have also chilled what you believe to be the expression of a sentiment. Remember the secret that escaped you. It has given me the clue to a thousand things that had seemed to me inexplicable; it has made me retract a mistaken judgment which I had formed through ignorance of the truth. I believed that I was reading the letter of a young girl of seventeen, addressed to a man who had been her husband for four days; instead of that she was a young woman writing to a man who has been in love with her for a year. Hence what she said to him was the natural expression of feelings acknowledged and shared for a long time. That secret, thus accidentally betrayed, has also explained to me the note which I received from the Château de Courcelles; but, in explaining it, it does not justify it; for nothing in nature could justify such an outrage; that note contained not one word which was not certain to revolt my soul and fill it with indignation — *Mon Dieu!* and I could still see you, still listen to you, still speak to you! Oh! how we degrade ourselves when we disregard a first remorse! Yes, I have need to repeat to myself, again and again, that I was loved by M. de Mora, by the noblest, strongest soul, by the most perfect human being who ever existed. That thought sustains

my soul, revives my heart, and restores to me sufficient pride to keep me from prostration.

You say I did not answer the note you wrote me at the moment of your departure. How could I answer it? When I now read expressions of your feeling, this is what my reason says to me: "He says the same to another, — perhaps with more strength and warmth; and there is this difference between myself and that other, that with her he directs all the actions of his life to prove to her that he feels what he says to her; whereas with me, on the contrary, there is not one of his actions, not one of his movements which is not in opposition to his words." After that observation, just as it is and cruelly well founded, tell me, what answer have I to make? Ah! I appeal to your conscience: do you think that I could fathom what is in it and yet preserve for you the feelings you desire? Well, I dare to assure you that if you fathom mine you will find no fault there but the one I have acknowledged. I have not had one thought, one impulse that did not deserve your esteem, — if it can be given to one who has sacrificed to you that which ought to have been dearer than even honour.

But tell me, why do you make me the object of your lecture and of the exercise of your virtue? You are late in thinking of it; and if you are imposing that task upon yourself in expiation of the harm you have done, I warn you that you are still misled. Give up the desire to make me a victim of your ethics, after having made me that of your levity. I have told you a hundred times that you can do nothing more for me but make me suffer. I assure you that I do not seek to make you reproaches. I forgive you with all my heart; and what I say to you to-day is only in reply to your letter. In your note of Saturday you showed me the fear you had lest the influence of the sorrow you pretended to feel should fall

upon your wife. What reply was I to make to that! That the fear alone was sufficient to protect her; that the sacrifice you made to her of your time, your affections, your person ought also to guarantee her. What can I add to that? That I wish her security; this is, in truth, all that we can wish to one with whom we have no relations. Those persons who have not seen you with your wife, and who do not know, as I now do, that you have loved her for a year past, say that you have converted the duties of marriage into servitude. They think that the striking of eleven o'clock is as austere as a convent rule: which you see is talking nonsense because they are not in the secret [of his previous attachment to his wife]. As for me who am, and who ought to tell you — but, no! that is enough for to-day.

Oh! I am very uneasy; the Vicomte de Chamans grows worse and worse; they do not understand his state; it alarms me. The Comte de Creutz was in tears yesterday; his wife was successfully confined, but the child is dead. It is not the child he mourns, but his wife's grief and the torture he finds in deceiving her as to the child's state. Happy people have their troubles! Yes, inasmuch as you say you have so many; but you admit that exercise and activity relieve them, and I believe it.

My health is worse than ever; I have had several attacks of fever; but I have made a vow not to poison myself in a doctor's way. Adieu. I require neither your sentiments, nor your moral philosophy, nor your virtue. See how free I set you.

Saturday, four o'clock in the morning, September 23, 1775.

Alas! it is true, we survive everything! the excess of sorrow becomes its remedy! Ah! *mon Dieu!* the moment has arrived when I can say to you, "I can live without loving you" with as much truth as when I said to you three months

ago, "I must love you or cease to be." My passion has gone through all the convulsions, all the crises of a great illness. First, I had continued fever with paroxysms and delirium; then the fever ceased to be continued, it turned to intermittent attacks, but so violent were they, so irregular, that the disease seemed to grow more acute. After keeping a long time at this degree of danger it has lessened a little; the attacks are fewer, and they are weaker. I have had intervals of calmness that seemed like health, or that seemed to allow some hope of it. After a while the fever nearly ceased, and for the last few days I feel as if nothing were left of it but the trembling and great weakness that always follow long and terrible illnesses. I think I am conscious of a coming convalescence; not the kind that M. de Saint-Lambert describes: "Oh! how the soul enjoys its convalescence." No, mine can never again know joy, but it will be soothed, it will no longer be actively torn, and that will be much; for though I am delivered from a very cruel ill, an old one, more sorrowful, deeper, more heart-breaking, still remains; that wound can never close; it is irritated and poisoned by the grief and remorse of all the moments of my life. It may find anodynes, the only remedy for incurable ills.

That is the history and a most faithful narrative of the state of my soul; there is not a word, not a circumstance that is not applicable to my present situation. I have loved you with madness; I have gone through all phases, all degrees of sorrow and of passion; I wanted to die; I believed I was dying; but I was held back by the charm attached to passion, even to unhappy passion. Since then, I have reflected; I wavered long, I suffered still; and then — I know not if it is you, if it is your conduct, if it is the necessity, perhaps the extremity of my misfortune — then all things brought me back to a less fatal state of mind.

I have looked about me; I have found friends whom my unhappiness, my madness had not alienated; I felt I was surrounded by care and kindness, and signs of interest. In the midst of such succour, such resources, I found a brighter, more animated sentiment; it is so true, so tender, so sweet, that in the end it must bring calmness and consolation into my soul. Can I ask for better or more than that? After the frightful tempest that has battered me for the last three years is not this entering into port? is it not seeing already a clearer sky?

No, do not think that I exaggerate the progress of my cure; I see myself such as I am, and if I feel a little calmer it is because I believe myself a little more susceptible to consolation. No doubt it would have cost me less to die than to separate from you. A quick death would have satisfied my nature and my passion; but the torture you have given to my soul is exhausted; it has lost its vitality; and then, I feel myself beloved; that softens everything. How shall we quit life when the tenderest sentiments strive to retain us?

Ah! I ought to have died at the moment when I lost him who loved me and whom I loved more than all else on earth! That is the sole blame I lay on you. Why did you retain me? Was it to condemn me to a lingering and more cruel death than the one I sought? Would to God I could efface from my memory and blot from my life these last years that have just gone by! Those that preceded them would forever have been the charm, if the torture, of my heart. Ah! six years of pleasure and of heaven's own happiness ought to make me feel that existence is a boon for which I should render thanks to Heaven, even at the summit of unhappiness.

If I can recover repose, if my soul can steady itself, perhaps the few remaining days I have to live may still be bear-

able. I will try to make my consolation of that which would be the happiness and joy of another. I will love from gratitude that which ought to be better loved if I responded to the warmth and eagerness of the friendship shown to me. For three months I have to blame myself for repulsing coldly and harshly the expression of the warmest interest, springing from the truest sentiment, of which I have received unequivocal proof, and you know how cautious I am in the matter of proof. I surprise you, no doubt; you think I dream; every word I say seems to you to violate truth and probability. Well, that will prove to you what you must already have seen, but never perhaps in so extreme a case, that "truth may sometimes seem untruthful."

Alas! it seems to me as surprising as it will to you. I am confounded that any one remains on earth who puts his pleasure and his hope on the saddest being in the world and the one most fitted to repulse affection. Can excess of grief be an attraction for certain souls? Yes, I see it, another soul has need to pity, to take interest, to be roused, and coming near me takes, or shares, that disposition without my willing it. For a long time past I have noticed that this man never left me without emotion; and I have inwardly felt that sorrow, illness, and old age were taking the place to him of graces, youth, and charm. Do you think it possible to be vain of having this attraction for an honest and sensible man? I am not vain of it; I am too unhappy, too profoundly unhappy to be accessible to the pleasures and follies of vanity. I have not told you of this before because I feared that to speak of it might give it too much consistency; I would not even allow my thoughts to dwell upon it. In the first days of my despair, when you passed sentence against my peace and life, I rejected with horror all that could separate me from you; rather than that I pre-

ferred to die. I hoped to calm myself upon that sentence thus pronounced against me; I believed your presence would still be good for me, that you would tell me what I had need to hear; that you yourself would help me to bear the blow that you had struck me. I have found nothing of the kind; and without pretending to complain, or even to blame you, I am convinced, and in an absolute manner, that your marriage ought to break off all intercourse between us; it only tortures me, and it may become a burden, perhaps an odious one, to you.

In those first moments I thought I could not live without hating you; but that dreadful emotion could not last in a soul so filled with passion and tenderness. Since then I have gone through all the anguish, all the agitations of sorrow; until, at last, I have reached a condition of mind that I believe is calmness. It may be only exhaustion and dejection; but, at least, I will not blame myself in future for what I suffer; that, I think, will surely be one great ill the less. Hitherto I have justified La Rochefoucauld's saying, that "the minds of most women serve to strengthen their follies only." Oh! how true that is! I sink with confusion as I recall what I dared to desire.

Yes, I was elated enough — or rather enough misled — to think it not impossible that you would love me above all things, and my madness gave me reasons that were plausible enough to satisfy my feelings. See, I beg of you, to what degree of illusion I was led. Nevertheless, I swear to you it was not self-love that led me astray; on the contrary, it is that which now assists me to return to truth and reason. It is that which judges me to-day with more severity than you can show; all that you have refused me; all that you have not been to me, seems to me now only the necessary result of the accuracy of your taste and judgment. But do not suppose

that I think you have been equitable in your conduct to me. It is my reason, nothing but my reason, that speaks to-day. Seeing myself so weak, culpable, and mad as I have been, I know that that does not justify the harm that you have done me — though I pardon it with all my heart. Perhaps one is never consoled for great humiliations; but I still hope that time may efface their impression. I hope that your marriage may make you as happy as it has made me unhappy; believe that when that wish is very sincere, generosity and good-will can no farther go.

I have received no answer to a letter that I wrote you a week ago. I do not complain; I merely let you know the fact, because I earnestly desire it may not be lost. Before you start for the country I beg you to return to me the three letters I addressed to you at Metz; and if you have received the above-named letter, sent to Bordeaux, be good enough to add that. I have not received your burnt almonds; that is why I have not thanked you for them. Nothing but hatred turns honey to poison, and I have no hatred.

But, in truth, I am distracted; I know not which afflicts me most — the harm you do me or the good another seeks to do. I faint, I need to flee into a desert for repose. I pity you for the length of this letter: but I am so ill, so depressed that I have not the strength to put it into shape, or to take out its inutilities. I feel how sorrows long protracted weary the soul and wear out the brain; but if I have allowed myself to speak thus at length it is that I may never return to this subject; there are subjects which ought never to be referred to again. If you were in Paris I should not have written you a volume, for you would not read it. It has been proved to me that you do not read my letters, and that is natural enough; they reached you in a place where you were

seeing and hearing that which had quite another interest for you than I and my letters.

Adieu, *mon ami* — this is the last time that I shall permit myself to use that name; forget that my heart has said it. Ah! forget me! forget what I have suffered! Leave me to believe that it is a good to have been so loved! leave me to believe that gratitude can suffice my soul. Adieu, adieu.

Sunday evening, September 24, 1775.

I do not wish to make your prediction false; you suppose perhaps that I have put temper, a plan, perhaps caprice, into this, and that nothing can excuse it. Reason is equable and just, and it is time that I should abide by it. You are married; you have loved, you love, you will love one who has *long* attracted you by the vivacity and strength of her feelings; that is natural, that is in the order of things, that is in the way of duty; and consequently one must be stupid or mad to enter upon arguments which would trouble your happiness and continue my torture.

All is said between us forever; and, believe me, let us spare the details; when once the thread of faith is broken it should not be joined again; that works ill, always. At all times, under all circumstances, I have told you the truth; therefore there is no confusion or embarrassment to me. In all my life I have never deceived any one, no matter who, in this world. I have no doubt been very culpable, but I can say that truth has ever been sacred to me. The situations in novels are nothing to that of sorrow and despair in which I have passed my life for years. No doubt the novel which you have now begun will be full of pleasure, good fortune, and whatever can make your felicity; I desire it with all my heart. As for me, I could figure only in the novels of Prévost; do you think I should be excluded from "Astrée"?

M. de Saint-Chamans is much better for the last two days; he thanks you a thousand times. M. d'Alembert is much touched by your remembrance. The Comte de Creutz has returned to heaven; mother and child are doing well. Mme. de Châtillon has just left me. I hope that M. d'Anlezy will soon return. I have no longer any fever.

Midnight, October 5, 1775.

This resembles madness, but it is reason, and very reasonable. I just remember that I told you to answer me and return my letters under cover to M. de Vaines. *Mon ami*, do only the half of that: return me my letters to his address and in God's name, do not forget a double envelope; but send your answer direct to me, so that it will not be so long in coming. I could not otherwise receive it till Saturday, 15th, and I have remembered that M. de Vaines goes to Versailles on Saturdays. That would delay what I await with an impatience that fevers me. *Mon ami*, you understand me? do not be heedless: your letter to me, and my letters, all my letters, to M. de Vaines.

Sunday evening, October 15, 1775.

Mon ami, we must be two. You know of nothing to say to me, you have nothing to say to me when I am silent. If there were no one behind you, no one to read over your shoulder, if my letters were not dropped on the floor, I would write volumes to you, I would not wait for yours; I would pour out my soul; I would pass my life in complaining, in forgiving, in loving you. But how? where can I find the strength you have taken from me? The blow you struck me reached my soul, and my body succumbed to it. I feel it — I do not wish to alarm you or interest you, but I feel that I am dying of it; there is no resource for me on earth; because,

supposing the impossible — that you were free and were to me what I desired — it would be too late; the springs of life are broken; I feel this without regret and without terror. *Mon ami,* you prevented me from killing myself, and you make me die. What inconsistency! but I forgive it; soon it will not matter.

Mon Dieu! I do not wish to reproach you: if you saw into my soul — ah! it is far indeed from wishing to hurt you or to put an instant's grief into your life. No, at the summit of my misery, the victim of having loved, feeling myself as guilty as I am unhappy, I find in my heart nothing but the keenest desire for your happiness; your interests are still the first of the life that is leaving me. Adieu, *mon ami;* you see that this is not ill-humour; but there are ties, there are things, that leave me to sorrow only. Write to me; tell me what you are doing; tell me if you are content; if that which interests you has ended as you desired. In short, *mon ami,* feel, if possible, a little sweetness in shedding an instant's pleasure into a deeply wounded heart, which is, nevertheless, all your own. I will write to you every evening, and when you leave Fontainebleau return me all my letters. Do not call this distrust; it is virtue rather, it is caring for your security.

October 16, 1775.

Mon ami, I write to you this morning, because I fear I cannot do so this evening. Yesterday I had a strong fever, and last night at two o'clock I thought I was dying from a fit of coughing, followed by suffocation, which really brought me very near to death. The terror of my maid made me think there must be something formidable in death; her face was quite convulsed, and when I was able to speak and ask her the cause of her troubled look she said, "I thought you were going to die," for she had had the courage to stay and

see me suffer. I am still in bed, though nothing remains but a slight oppression, and my usual ailments.

Have you gone or are you going to Montigny? Did not Mme. de Boufflers give you a rendezvous? She started this morning with the Abbé Morellet and returns Thursday. The Archbishop of Toulouse is expected this evening. A person who knows Mme. de Boufflers very well said to me yesterday: "She makes herself the victim of a desire for consideration, and by dint of running after it she loses it. I will wager," he continued, "that she will do the impossible to be admitted, not to the dinner of kings, like Candide in Venice, but to the dinner of the ministers at Montigny." He said that as a mere conjecture, but this morning I have received from him these two lines: "Will you believe now in my knowledge of character? You laughed at me yesterday; well, she started this morning and means to tumble into the midst of people who are scarcely of her acquaintance."

Vanity of vanities! *Mon ami*, if she has gone to meet you she has done well! she ought to cherish the man to whom she once resolved to speak with truth. It must be a great relief to her to quit the mask occasionally. How can people live in such perpetual restraint? Is vanity that which has most power in nature? Tell me who you think will be minister of war. They say it will be the Baron de Breteuil, who has hitherto spent his life in the Foreign Affairs. This is like Maître Jacques in the "Avare."

Have you been reading much in order to begin your great work? You have had but eight days, but you do things so fast that eight days will perhaps suffice you to do what others could not do in eight months. Have you seen M. Turgot? This is the moment when what you have done for him ought to be of great use. You will see him at Montigny. I wish you could talk with him; you would then see

how superior he is to those who judge him with prejudice and passion.

It is only a few days since you wrote me, no doubt to lift me to the skies: "It is from here that I tell you that I love you, here, where I am loved, where I am occupied, tranquil, etc." Eh! *mon ami*, it is easy enough to be loved when a man is young, with a charming face and the manners and attentions of one who seeks to please; and especially when all the actions of his life show that he does not hold strongly to anything. How should you not be loved? fools and dandies are loved! M. de B . . . is adored by his wife, who is young, pretty, and agreeable; the wonder to me is that his head is not turned by it; he does not feel, as Comte de C . . . does, that he was chosen; he remembers that it was an income of twenty-five thousand *livres* that made the marriage.

But do you know what would be really piquant, rare, extraordinary, and half a wonder (though there are examples of it, such as Diane de Poitiers, Mme. de Maintenon, Mlle. Clairon)? It is to be able to say: "I am loved" when old, ugly, sad, ill and sunk in sorrow, and especially when to this can be added: "I am loved by a charming and honourable man, who is at that time of life when men are most fastidious and most difficult to please." That, *mon ami*, is worth saying because it is marvellous. But for a man to draw vanity from being loved by a wife when he is charming, and is convinced and shown from morning till night and night till morning that he is passionately loved — ah! fie, that is so common. Comte de C . . . says that and enjoys it; but the truth is I do not think another being would wish to be a third, or would demean herself to accept the surplus of that great passion.

Adieu, *mon ami;* I do not know why I talk to you of all

this. If I have fever it does not amount to delirium; but I find pleasure in talking with you, and I tell you all that comes into my mind. Write me; I need to be consoled and sustained; my soul and my body are in a deplorable state. *Mon ami*, you are fourteen leagues away; that is very far, but it would be very near if — But adieu.

Thursday evening, October 19, 1775.

Mon ami, I should be overwhelmed by your reproaches if my resolutions had not forestalled them. Yesterday I blamed myself, I told you there was cruelty and baseness in making you suffer for a sorrow without resource. One must live or die of it, but, above all, in silence. You have known and felt unhappiness and passion enough to conceive the excesses to which they both may lead. I detest them, I abjure them, those excesses; I would rather be dead than affront you. Perhaps I foresaw this new misfortune when I longed to quit life and escape you. I felt that after my cruel loss my soul could never recover itself; in fact that I ought nevermore to love, that I *could not* love again. The principle of my life, the god that sustained me, that inspired me, was no more. I was left alone in nature. Ah! why did you come there? why did you seek me? At that moment I did not need consolation or support. Why did you say to me words that my soul was accustomed to hear with transport? Why did you take the language of him who had just died for me? Why, in short, did you beguile the reason of one already confused by excess of sorrow? It was for you to judge, to foresee; I could only moan and die. You see now the horrible result of that thoughtlessness on your part. No doubt at that moment you could not foresee the sort of poison you were pouring into my soul; but you knew even then that you did not love me enough to

make the consolation and peace of my life your first interest.

Ah! there is the source and the cause of all I suffer. My soul in becoming culpable has lost its energy. I loved you: and from that moment I became incapable of what is noble and what is strong. I judge my conduct, *mon ami;* I blame it more than you! When you pronounced my sentence, I ought to have borne it, I ought to have torn myself from you, or from life; there is baseness in seeking to be pitied and comforted by him who strikes us; and that is so true that I undergo, ceaselessly, an awful combat; my soul revolts against your action, my heart is filled with tenderness for you. You are lovable enough to justify that feeling; but you have so mortally affronted me that I must feel humiliated. *Mon ami,* I have told you, often, that my situation is now impossible to endure; a catastrophe must come; I know not if it be nature or passion that will bring it about. Let us wait, and, above all, let us be silent. You have enough kindness, enough delicacy to spare my feelings, and yet you believe me, me, sufficiently cruel to wish to harass and alarm yours! Ah! *mon ami,* if sorrow sometimes makes us selfish it also makes us very delicate; the sorrowful have usually a tender touch; they fear to wound; they are warned by their own pain. Yet you believe that now, when there barely remains to me the strength to moan, I seek, I select the expressions that will hurt you most! You do not know me; if I could be deliberate with you, if I were not moved by impulse, no doubt I could take more pains to avoid wounding you; but remember that — I love you.

That is my crime towards you. Ah! *mon ami,* lay your hand upon your conscience, and I am very sure that, without a great effort of generosity, you will pardon me. But, and this I swear, I shall no longer need your virtue; I will

lift my soul to the point of not requiring your pardon. Adieu.

Friday, midday, October 20, 1775.

I hasten to write as if you could read me the sooner. *Mon ami,* you are crazy! You intend to say harm of M. Turgot to M. de Vaines! and for me! it is in my interest that you make this blunder! Oh! what a bad head you have, but what kindness! how amiable you are! You are mistaken if you think that poverty, or the comforts that come from money can do aught for my happiness, or increase my unhappiness. It is not M. Turgot, nor M. de Vaines, nor the king, nor any power on earth who can calm my soul, or drive away one heart-rending memory, or put balm into my blood. Alas! to do that needs that you should love me; but it is easier to you to solicit a minister, and hate him because he has the honesty not to think of my fortunes. "It is not gold, my friend, nor grandeurs that make us happy." [La Fontaine.] That is more true for certain souls than I can express. I have never known compensation for what I have desired: passion is absolute; tastes yield to circumstances. I have never desired or loved but in one way; in that I have been more consistent than belongs to my sick brain; I have never repented for my manner of acting on the various occasions which I have had to enrich myself and increase, or to speak more correctly, to acquire consideration — that, at least, which fools distribute, and on which empty brains and souls are fed. Good-bye, *mon ami.* I am expecting the Vicomte de Saint-Chamans. I will continue after the arrival of the post; I hope, yes I believe, that I shall have a letter from you. After seeing indifferent people all day long, you will have gone home at night and said to yourself, "I will do something to give pleasure to one who loves me."

Four o'clock, after the post.

No letter from you! Would you know how just I am? I hated my other letters. What does all else matter when soul and thought are fixed on a single point? I can fully conceive how Newton spent thirty consecutive years on one thing, and the object which he had before him was not worth mine. *Mon ami,* to love is the highest good. To be loved by one whom we love is being too happy. There was a time in my life — but my God! how have I fallen!

No letter from you; it is my fault; my letter through M. de Vaines was sent too late. I wished to follow you wherever you went, but you did not take pains to inform me. *Mon ami,* I have read and re-read your letter of yesterday three times running. What you say on the difference between intellect and genius is excellent and of great eloquence; your comparison is *genius.* But I do not think with you that to govern well requires men of passion. It requires *character* and not passion; intellect suffices, and it is preferable in a monarchy, where uniform progress is necessary, where welfare should be preferred to glory. It is because I believe that neither passion nor genius is desirable in a French minister that I think there is no man better able to govern us than L. de T . . . [Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse]. I answer for it that no soul is more inaccessible to passions. Nor is it for energy alone that we should praise him. He has character, many ideas, great activity, and a facility, an amenity which smooths away all difficulties.

This is what I reply to what you say to me of M. Turgot: he is like Lycurgus, and L. de T . . . is more like Cardinal de Richelieu, or rather Colbert, for he would not have the force nor the atrocity of the cardinal.

Mon ami, you will receive this letter Saturday morning;

no doubt it will be the last, for I feel sure that you will start Sunday. Here are *my orders;* make a packet of my letters, put my address upon them, and give them with your own hand to M. de Vaines, who will countersign [frank] for the post that precious deposit. I wish to know the hour at which you leave Fontainebleau. Yes, I have an interest in knowing; in what do we not have interest concerning those we love? I told you that I would complain no more, and burden you no longer with the weight of my woes. But remember that I cannot pledge myself to have a *perfect,* equable conduct. That may come, perhaps; indifference may not always be impossible to my heart. I say, therefore, that I will no longer make you suffer from my suffering; but understand that I shall be neither courageous enough nor reasonable enough to pretend not to suffer when I feel myself torn with anguish.

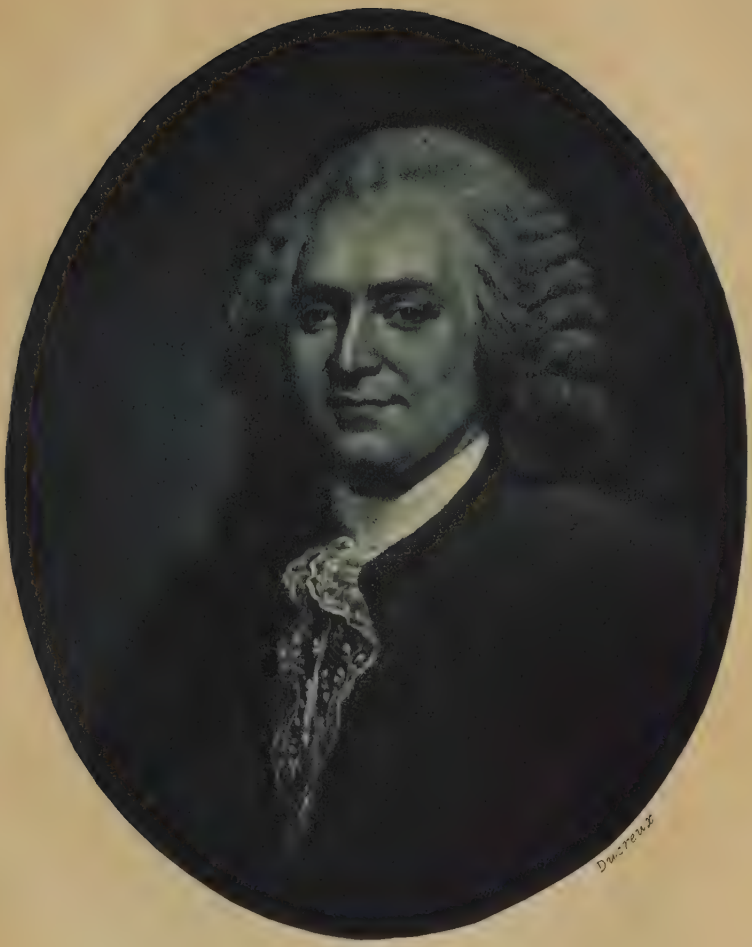
Adieu, *mon ami;* I seem to be parting from you for a very long time, and this separation tries me more than when you are here and can say adieu; then there is but that instant of life for me, I live with all my force in that one moment; but to-day it is not so; I am sad, depressed, I am deprived of you, of your letter, I see to-morrow, and after! Ah! the future is very long. Adieu.

Tuesday evening, October 24, 1775.

The oracles ceased because they feared the echoes. My last letter was written Wednesday after dinner; I judged you would start Sunday or Monday; I now imagine that you will wait the arrival of the Comte de Saint-Germain [just appointed minister of war], who is expected Wednesday or Thursday. He is a man of merit, a man by himself; he has reached his position without intriguing; if he makes reforms and changes we may be sure that they are for the

country's good. He will have the confidence of the military because he is known to be well-trained and to have had a wide experience. No one can make better use of your talents; he will give you active service. You ought to think of yourself. Did you not tell me that he already felt a great interest in you? You must not turn your back to fortune.

I received your letters of Friday and Sunday; they are short, they are rare — But, *mon ami*, I do not complain; you have so many diverse interests! and they give you so many cares that I cannot see how you will suffice for all. Do not repeat to me more than is necessary that I must "try" to accept your situation. *Mon ami*, those words *I must try*, when feelings or patience are concerned, are meaningless and mere absurdities; it is concerning behaviour, business, matters of interest, that one should *try*, because all actions, all proceedings are then directed, or should be directed, by reflection; and it is silly and thoughtless to put ourselves in contradiction to its dictates and interests. But as for me, I will "try," I will make an effort, and why? what do I propose to myself? what do I wish? — No, no, *mon ami*, I have missed the object of my life; life has no longer any interest for me. I shall keep silence no doubt, but it will not be by "trying," it will be from weighing, estimating, judging all things, and above all, from seeing the end so near; I will calm myself, if possible, during these last days of suffering. We can bear all at the end of a journey; I desire not to cost you a regret. I have no need of tears after death. I ask you only the indulgence and kindness shown to the sick and the unfortunate. Adieu, *mon ami;* I passed a cruel night, coughing frightfully. I have a little fever this evening, but I must write a line to M. de Vaines. I shall send this letter through him.



Turgot

Thursday, midnight, October 26, 1775.

You are very lucky if you can breathe at ease; as for me it is impossible, and I cannot express what suffering it is — but it is of you I wish to speak, *mon ami.*

I think you will do wrong to give up M. de Saint-Germain at once. In the present hurly-burly he can see nothing; nothing will leave a trace upon him; whereas if you were here after the first moments are over he would draw you nearer to him; you could be useful to him in many ways. That man falls from the clouds; he will have a thousand questions to ask, and he has enough experience not to ask them at random. He has known you so long; you have been "his son;" he will not fear committing himself to a young man he loves. I may be mistaken, but I regard these first moments as all-important for you. Look at the matter, *mon ami;* put no false generosity, no levity into your conduct. I tell you what I see. I know well that there is a degree of interest that affects the sight; but you are nearer to yourself than even I am; therefore distrust yourself.

You tell me nothing of your affairs; what does that show? Are they ended as you wish, or have you put as much negligence into them as Maréchal de Duras puts levity? Oh! what excellent negotiations! — M. de Vaines praises you to me, and in the best manner; it is his soul that lauds you. I tell you this to prove to you that you did not wound him that day you spoke to him of me; but I will wound you seriously if you ever return to the charge. *Mon ami,* the first rule in friendship is to serve our friends in the way they wish, be it the most fantastic way in the world; we should have the delicacy to bend to their will in all that is directly personal to themselves. That principle laid down, my manner, my mania if you will, is to be served by no one; I value intentions as others value

actions. Therefore do not employ your energy on me, turn it to other objects; for I repeat, you will offend me if ever you concern yourself with my interests again. Reflect that if I had so chosen I should not have remained poor; therefore poverty cannot be the greatest evil to me. *Mon ami,* believe me; I always speak the truth, and I know very well what I want.

You have not told me about the theatres, nor a word of what you are doing: you feel no need of conversing; your only need is to rush everywhere and see everything. I wish God could give you his gift of omnipresence. As for me, I should be in despair if I had that talent; I am far from wishing to be everywhere, for I long to be nowhere. Ah! *mon Dieu!* I wish I had Mme. de Muy's illusion; I think that could give me happiness; she is sure that she will see M. de Muy again; what a support to a desolate heart! Four years ago, just at this season, I was receiving two letters a day from Fontainebleau. His absence was for ten days; I had twenty-two letters; in the midst of the Court dissipations, he, being the object in vogue, the centre of fascination to the handsomest women, he had but one purpose, one pleasure: he desired to live in my thoughts; he wished to fill my life; and I remember that during those ten days I went out but once: I expected a letter, and I wrote one! — Ah! those memories kill me! and yet I would fain live that life again, and under conditions more cruel still. *Mon ami,* if you see the depths of my soul, you must pity me! But do not tell me so; it is courage that I need — oh, yes! I need it; I suffer cruelly.

Tell me if you have news regularly from Mme. de . . . Have you done anything for that affair that interests her? You tell me nothing; but you are so hurried! Do you intend to postpone your work on M. Dumesnil-Durand's

book? M. de Saint-Germain may answer it perhaps in four lines; that would spare you much trouble, but it is not the way to add to your reputation, and I should regret it for you.

The chevalier is about to have a play he has just written acted; he has shown it to no one; that method served him for "Agathe" and I hope it will answer in this instance. They make and play comedies themselves [this plural refers to Mme. de Gléon, who is understood in speaking of the Chevalier de Chastellux]; they have constant scenes with each other of a tearful character; they torment each other from morning till night: it is self-love on one side, complaining; and on the other frantic vanity. I am sorely afraid that with the talents they both have for comedy, and even for tragedy, they may bring about a final scene in a play which ought to end without notoriety. Ah! how unhappy everybody is!

You see very well that I cannot write to you until your departure, for I do not know when that will be, and I do not want a letter to be left there after you are gone. Adieu; I love you wherever I am, but not wherever you are. What is to be the "final scene" for us?

Wednesday, November 8, 1775.

My letters miss you, and my presence is not necessary to you. You have spent five days in Paris reproaching me, and yourself too, every moment that you were here. You were two weeks at Fontainebleau; and there was not a single day when you could not have found opportunity to come and return. You knew that I was ill; you knew your share in my illness, and you wrote, as if to crown me with joy and gratitude, that if you "could come to Paris I should be the sole object of your journey." You did not take that journey, and now you dare to say that it was because I have grown so hard to satisfy and so unjust. Oh! how you weigh

upon my heart when you try to prove to me that it ought to be content with yours! I will never complain, but you force me to cry out, so sharp and deep is the hurt you give me. *Mon ami,* I have been loved, I am loved still, and I die from regret that it is not by you. — But are we ever loved by what we love? do justice and reflection ever enter into a sentiment so involuntary and so arbitrary?

I have languished since your departure; I have not had an hour without suffering; the ills of my soul have passed to my body; I have fever daily, and my physician, who is not the most skilful of men, repeats to me perpetually that I am consumed by grief, that my pulse and my respiration show an active evil, and then he departs saying, "We have no remedies for the soul." There are none for me; it is not to be cured that I desire, but to be calmed, to recover some moments of repose which will lead me to that which nature will soon grant me. That one thought is all which rests me; I have no longer strength to love; my soul wearies me, tortures me; nothing sustains me now; desire and hope are dead within me; the weaker I grow, the more obsessed I am by one sole thought. No doubt I do not love you better than I have loved you, but I can love nothing else; the ills of the body bring me forever back to my one point. There is no escape, no diversion; the long nights, the loss of sleep have made my love a sort of madness; it has become a fixed idea, and I know not how I have escaped a score of times from uttering words that would have told the secret of my life and of my heart. Sometimes, in society, tears overtake me, and I am forced to fly.

Alas! — in picturing this madness I do not seek to touch you, for I believe that you will never read these words. Besides, in the state in which I am what have I to claim, or to fear, from you? It suffices me to think you honest, and to

be very sure of all your actions to the end. There are situations which compel even the hardest and most insensible of souls: all who surround me seem more eager for me; seeing the eternal separation so near, they gather to me. I cannot praise enough the attentions and interest of my friends; they do not console me, but it is certain that they put a sweetness into my life. I love them, and I would I loved them more. Adieu. I succumb to all these painful thoughts; but still, in pouring out my soul I comfort it a little.

Thursday, eleven at night, November 19, 1775.

Mon ami, I wrote you four pages yesterday; but never can I end my day without saying the words, "I love you." I have just seen the person in the world by whom I am most beloved, and that has made me feel, more and more, the point to which I love you. Had I heard *you* announced unexpectedly, after three months' absence, how I should have quivered from head to foot! how I should not have known a word I said, or what was said to me! *Mon ami,* one must love to know all that Nature has granted of good and of pleasure to man. It is sweet no doubt to be loved; but where is the happiness? for to judge, to appreciate the affection of an excellent man, to respond with kindness to his involuntary emotions, to see alternately sadness and vexation on the face of one all filled with a desire for our happiness — oh! if that flatters the vanity of silly women, it afflicts an honourable and sensitive soul.

Mon ami, do you suffer at not hearing from me? has it made a void in your life? Are you so occupied, so intoxicated that you do not feel in turn an active need and a great languor? Am I very near to your thought when I am near you in person? Ah! *mon ami,* these questions picture to you a very feeble part of what I feel; I die of sadness. My

friends think me affected by my sorrows. I felt this evening the kindness of M. d'Anlezy and M. de Schomberg; they reassured me as to my lungs; my cough distressed them, but they consoled me. Excellent men! they did not know all I suffer. But I do not deserve to be pitied, even by you: for see the excess of my madness; I feel that I love you beyond the forces of my soul and body; I feel that I am dying because I have no communication with you; that privation is the most cruel of all punishments to me. I count the days, the hours, the minutes; my head wanders; I want the impossible; I want news of you on the days when there is no courier — in short, what shall I say? I love you to madness. After that, comprehend me if you can. — I do not send you my letters; I should shock you, I should irritate you, if only by contradiction; more than that, if by some chance you were forced to stay in the place where you now are, six months, a year, or all your days, I think I can answer for it that you would never hear again from me! Conceive from this the horror that *accursed letter* caused me, dated from that place which paints itself to me in a manner more horrible than hell was ever painted to Saint Theresa and the most frenzied brains. No argument on earth could overcome so fatal an impression; I shudder still, remembering that date and the few short lines that followed it. Oh, heaven! what had you become? had you absolutely ceased to be conscious of my woe? Adieu; that thought blights my heart.

After the post hour, November 10, 1775.

No, the effects of passion, or of reason (for I know not which inspires me at this moment) are inconceivable. After awaiting the postman with the need, the agitation that makes waiting the greatest torture, I was ill of it physically; my cough and the spasms in my head lasted five or six hours.

Well! after that violent state, which is not susceptible of either distraction or relief, the postman came; I had letters, there were none from you. A violent internal and external convulsion seized me, and then, I know not what happened to me, but I felt calmed; it seemed to me that I felt a sort of comfort in finding you more indifferent and colder than you have ever thought me passionate. By proving that I am nothing to you I believe you make it easier for me to detach myself from you. It is so proved to me that you can only make the misery of all the moments of my life that whatever gives me strength to separate myself and keep apart from you has become the greatest comfort I can feel. And here I am, wishing that you may be kept, by inclination or by force, in the place where you now are; your absence ceases to be an ill to me; it is repose. Adieu.

Monday, November 13, 1775.

Mon ami, how amiable you are and how you justify the excess of my passion and my unhappiness. Yes, I believe that what I have suffered, what I await, *nothing* could have had the power to prevent me, to protect me, from loving you. There are things that make me believe in fatality: I was to live to see you again, and then die of it. But, *I have loved you;* I complain no more. Leave me to bear my fate; and keep yourself from crowning all my sorrows by making me love life at the moment I must quit it, or rather when I feel it escaping me. Alas! *mon ami,* in pity, in kindness, let me think that death will deliver me from a burden that overwhelms me. Let me pause and rest my thought on that long desired, long expected moment which I feel with a sort of transport is now approaching me. But yesterday, when I saw you, when I listened to you, I thought with tender emotion that soon I must bid you adieu forever. I felt my

pulse, as it were; I tried to think that I was not so ill; I regretted to feel there was no hope. My tenderness for you so filled my soul that it would not allow me to have a wish that had for its object to part from you. Oh! under that dreadful aspect death is indeed an evil, a great evil.

Mon Dieu! you will never know the heart-rending anguish, the species of death and agony in which I have spent the last three weeks. It is not the loss of my strength, my emaciation, the excessive change in me that are surprising. What is inconceivable is that my life has resisted this agony. — But you are here: I find you again, so full of kindness and sensibility; you have calmed my soul, you have put balm into my blood. It was less painful to me to suffer last night; I could not sleep, I had fever, I coughed; but I was, truly, not unhappy, for my soul was occupied by you in a sweet and tender way. I thought that I would write to you, and I dared not hope for a letter, yet it did not seem to me impossible. Judge, therefore, the feeling of happiness that came over me when on entering my room they said to me, "From M. de Guibert." *Mon ami*, those words strengthened me for my whole day. I do not fear the fever, having your letter; the remedy has more power over me than the disease. — Only, I must drive from my mind this thought that returns unceasingly: "He arrived in Paris Saturday at five o'clock, and he waited till Sunday at one o'clock to know if I were dead, or ill, or sorrowful." Ah! *mon ami*, you forgot that I loved you; do you no longer know how I love with all the faculties of my soul, my mind, with the air I breathe? *I love to live, and I live to love.*

I am full of eagerness to know what M. de Saint-Germain has said to you. I have thought again over his letter; it is good, very good; and I do not doubt that you will be satisfied with the way in which he treats you. If I am not to

see you to-morrow (Tuesday) morning, write me a line, for I do not think you will come again this evening. If you do not come in the morning and cannot give me your evening, I shall be alone from four to half-past five; so there are three ways to see me with freedom. Take one of them, *mon ami*, for I have need to see you. Good-bye. You see I am giving myself compensations. Good God! what I suffered in being forced to silence. *Mon ami*, do you believe that there is or could be any one in the world more keenly conscious of all your charm, more profoundly absorbed in you than I? Do you believe that there is a degree of tenderness and passion beyond that which inspires me? the beatings of my heart, the throbs of my pulse, my breathing, all that is the effect of passion. This is more marked, more evident than ever — not that it is stronger; but it gleams as it vanishes, like the light that flashes up before it is extinguished.

Midnight, Saturday, December 30, 1775.

Mon ami, you did not wait for me, did you? You have not had time to think of me; there would therefore be awkwardness and folly in reproaching myself and in making excuses to you.

But the truth is that, with the will and the desire to write to you, I could not do so. From four o'clock until this instant I have not been one minute alone. Besides, what have I to say, *mon ami*, when you ask me to tell you of myself? With two words I can always express my physical and moral condition: *I love, I suffer;* and that is the order of things for a long time past. Yes, I have suffered much; I have had fever. I have it now, and I feel that my night will be detestable; I am dying of thirst, and my chest and stomach are burning; this is my bad night; my day has been more tolerable.

There has been such good company, such good conversation in my room that I wished for you: as for myself, the good, bad, and indifferent add nothing to the need I always have of seeing you; it is the need of my soul, just as the need to breathe is the want of my lungs. *Mon Dieu!* how I wish I could moderate or even extinguish that need! it is too active for my feeble body; and it has become more necessary than ever that I should accustom myself to see you seldom. All things separate us, *mon ami*, and all things are drawing me nearer to him who was born three hundred leagues away from me. Alas! he was inspired by that which can do the impossible. But I do not complain; you grant me enough; we are always too rich when about to move, or to lose all.

Well, *mon ami*, have you carried out your plans? have you worked hard? I do not believe it. This is what you have done: dinner; after dinner, talk; at five o'clock went to the Temple [the house of the Prince de Conti, grand prior of France], where you read the changes in the "Connétable." Of course they praised it to the skies, and with that gentle eloquence the hours flew by. You came home shortly before nine o'clock; it was then very comfortable to vegetate in your family and to be adored till half-past eleven or midnight. Here I employ the art of the painter of Agamemnon and say no more. Good-night. I do not know what hour you destine for me to-morrow; though you said it was the evening, so many things pass through your head that your plans should never be regarded as engagements. In short, *mon ami*, give me what you can. But do not come at four o'clock: I have told a person to come then, as I felt sure you would not choose that hour. I reproach myself for detaining you so long; you are as much surrounded as a minister. I beg of you to gather up the letters that you have of mine and bring them back to me.

Eleven o'clock at night, 1776.

I have been thinking that if you are not happy, very happy, happiness cannot exist, that there is no such thing on earth; for you are made expressly to enjoy much and suffer little. Everything serves you for this, — your defects, your good qualities, your sensibility, your levity. You have tastes and no passions; you have soul and no character. It seems to me that Nature studied to make in you the most accurate combinations which could render a man both happy and agreeable. You will ask me the occasion of these remarks. Ah! if you cannot find it for yourself, believe that I am rambling incoherently — which would be quite true ninety-nine times in a hundred. I did not expect you this evening, but I tore myself away with difficulty to go with Comte d'Anlézy to pass an hour with M. de Saint-Chamans, whose state again makes me uneasy.

When shall I see you? and how long shall I see you? My life is so short, our ties are so fragile — ah! *Mon Dieu!* I thought them broken. There is nothing solid between us, nothing well-founded but sorrow; you signed the warrant by the sacrifice of your liberty and my peace for the little time I have to live. Adieu; tell yourself that, inasmuch as you have condemned me, you owe me nothing; be cruel if you can. Give me the *coup de grâce*, that I may bless and treasure you still.

My letters, mon ami.

I have not received the papers which Mme. Geoffrin is awaiting impatiently; return them to me at once. I entreat you.

Five o'clock in the morning, 1776.

I cannot sleep; my stomach, my head, my soul, keep me awake and torture me. To charm away my ills I want to talk to you. You see, *mon ami*, that I cannot — I *cannot*

go to dine with M. Boutin. I sent you word that I had written to excuse myself; and, in truth, it would be beyond my strength. Excepting you, I could not listen or speak to any one. I have been so upset, I am still in such anxiety, that I can be at ease with no one but that distressed family; I suffer and feel with them. *Mon ami*, my heart is full of tears, and those I shed have not only M. de Saint-Chamans for their object. Ah! how close you are to all that moves my soul! it is you, always you, under whatever form and in whatever manner I express a painful sentiment. My regrets, my fears, my remorse, — all is filled with you; how could it not be so? I exist by you and for you only.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* you say that I reject and repulse all that you do for me. Explain, then, what it is that fastens me, that chains me to this life of sorrow that I ought to have quitted when I lost him who had made me know the value of life and made me cherish it. Who held me back? who holds me still and rends my heart? You know as well as I do whether I love you; you know that when I say I hate I only prove how much I love you; my silence, my coldness, my unkindness are to you a proof that no stronger, tenderer passion can exist in all the world. My God! how I have fought it! how I have abhorred it! yet it has always been more powerful than my reason or my will.

Mon ami, send an excuse at once to M. Boutin. Keep me your good-will for to-morrow, Wednesday, at Mme. Geoffrin's. I hope I may be able to go if we have news to-day. I received your letter from Versailles on coming home; it came at midnight. I have not told you rightly how touched I am by that compassionate kindness. Good-morning — or good-night; my night is just beginning. It is far sweeter to talk with you than to sleep; but in order to love you, to suffer a little longer, I must have sleep; for

to love, one must live; and it is very certain that I live but to love you. Adieu, kindest and most cherished of all created beings. That is forgiving — but forgetting! ah! *mon ami.*

Six o'clock in the morning, 1776.

I cannot say that my first thought is for you; for I have not yet slept: but my thought is full of you, and I want to tell you that I love you, before a few moments' sleep takes from me the joy of feeling it. *Mon ami,* I came to bed very sad; I had expected you, and that hope animated and sustained my soul. When the hour for hope had passed, ah! I fell very low; for my body is so weakened. Persons were all around me, but I could not have been more alone in a desert. "Ah! *mon Dieu!*" I said to myself as I heard the names announced, "all whom I do not await, all whom I do not desire are punctual, assiduous." It is dreadful to live to one point, to have but one object, one desire, one thought. *Mon ami,* that is certainly not a remedy for fever; nevertheless, my fever has been far less high than it was the previous night; I had neither thirst nor heat nor a species of delirium. Can you imagine that I was unable to fix my mind on you? my feeling for you escaped me like all the rest; and this failure of power over my thought increased my agitation. At present I am more tranquil; I suffer, but in a way that is bearable.

Are you in Paris, *mon ami?* Shall I see you to-day? I wish you the best, the highest fortune; still, it is sad to be attached to one from whom all things part us. If M. de Saint-Germain employs you, you will be constantly at Versailles; and then a wife, a family, tastes, dissipations! Ah! *mon ami,* I complain of nothing, but tell me, in good faith, could I live in the midst of all that? What you could do for me would cost you much, and what you could

not do would torture me. Better say and do like the wife of Pætus: "I weep not, but I die." I do not know if this is fever, but for a long time past my head is exhausted, and, weary with weeping, I have no tears; that relief is no longer at the call of my sorrow. — But, *mon ami*, it is of you I want to speak. You must have arrived in Paris very late; for surely I should have heard of you to-day if you arrived at five o'clock. No matter; I love you.

Midday, March, 1776.

I do not understand what this means. Apropos of my landlord you say, "I never knew any one so difficult." In what? why? I do not understand. But inasmuch as you are kind enough to make this lease for me, I would rather it were not done on a *Friday*. That day, that word still makes me tremble with horror. If it is all the same to you, choose Saturday; or else, I will not sign till Saturday. Forgive this trouble.

No, I do not send for you any longer; I do not urge you to give me your time. It seems to me that it is forcing nature to seek to bring you nearer. By the nature of things, by circumstances, by our tastes, by our ages, we are too separated to be able to come nearer to each other now. We must therefore submit to that which has more power than will or even liking, namely: necessity. You are married; your first duty, your chief care, and your greatest pleasures are there; follow that course therefore; and reflect that whatever you might subtract from it could not satisfy a sensitive soul. The weakness and exhaustion of my whole being make me avoid the convulsions of passion; I want repose, I want to breathe, I want to try what the truest feelings, the tenderest friendship can do for the consolation of a being sunk in sorrow and misfortune for so many years

Oh! leave me; give yourself up to your tastes, your duties, your work; surely that is enough to fill your life.

No, do not come this evening; you have a pleasure and relaxation beside you which are much more efficacious than those you seek with me; besides, I stayed at home last evening, and I do not wish to go two days without seeing Mme. de Saint-Chamans, who is ill. To-morrow, if you like, I will see you. I dine with the Neapolitan ambassador, and shall not go out in the evening. To-day I dine with Mme. Geoffrin. Adieu. Of all whom I know, of all whom I love, of all who love me, you are the one I see least. I do not complain; I tell myself it could not be otherwise; and I hasten to turn away my thoughts from that which I cannot change.

Midnight, 1776.

Oh! you are all ice, you happy people! Men of the world, your souls are shut to keen and deep impressions. I am ready to thank Heaven for the ills that overwhelm me, and of which I die, because they have left me the twofold sensibility and the deep passion which make me comprehending of all that suffers, all that knows sorrow, all that is tortured by the joy and the misery of loving. Yes, *mon ami*, you are more fortunate than I, but I have more pleasure than you.

I have just finished the first volume of the "Paysan Perverti." That final page did not delight you! you felt no need to speak to me about it, to read it to me! soul of ice! It is happiness, it is heaven's own language. And Manon's death, and her passion, her remorse, and those dolorous and passionate words that she employs! Ah! we passed a whole evening together, the book was there, you had read it, and you never said one word of it to me! *Mon ami*, there is a little corner of your soul, and a large part of your conduct

which might cause, without injustice or folly, a comparison which you would not like. Yes, there is a little of Edmond in your make-up; you do not resemble him in the full face, but a little in profile. *Mon ami*, this book, this bad book, so wanting in taste, in delicacy, in good sense even, — this book, unless I am much mistaken, is made with a portion of the passion and warmth which inspired Saint-Preux and Julie. Oh! there are delightful sayings! if they are not the last sparkles of thy genius, Jean-Jacques, if they are not the ashes, half-extinguished, of the passion that fired thy soul, read, I conjure thee, this book, and thy heart will be stirred to interest in its author, who has, it is true, so ill-conceived and ill-arranged his work, but who is certainly capable of writing a better [Rétif de La Bretonne]. Yes, I punish you, *mon ami*, I put that task upon you also; but you will get out of it, as usual, by not reading the book. That is what Edmond would have done, and he was less occupied than you. *Mon ami*, here is the title, or rather the headings of a letter I should have written had I been Pierre the editor: "Edmond to Manon. How is it possible to apply the same feelings to so many different objects? — The world is a dangerous abode for whosoever has a heart like Edmond's."

You will please return my book and my letters. You tell me that you have been more dissipated than occupied this afternoon, — opera, visits, attentions, manners, frivolity of people in society, talent, genius, the necessity for winning credit! Oh! the amazing contrast! and what a dreadful misfortune to see so closely a man even more seductive than he is lovable. *Mon ami*, I cough enough to frighten all around me, and I can no more. Truly, you ought to love me; you have but a moment. I feel that.

A box with four places for women; three tickets to the

parquet; think about it and do not neglect an attention which will oblige one you love.

I shall not go out; I have fever, and my cough is continued.

Six in the evening, 1776.

I would, *mon ami*, that during the few days I have to live, you should not pass a single one without remembering that you are loved to madness by the most unhappy of human beings. Yes, *mon ami*, I love you. I will that that sad truth pursue you, that it trouble your happiness; I will that the poison which forbids my life, which consumes it, and will no doubt end it, shall put into your soul a sorrowful sensibility which may incline you to regret one who loved you with tenderness and passion. Adieu, *mon ami*, do not love me; for that is contrary to your duty and against your will; but suffer me to love you, and let me say it and resay it to you a hundred times, a thousand times, but never with expressions that answer to what I feel.

Mon ami, come and dine to-morrow with Mme. Geoffrin. I have so little time to live that nothing you can do for me could have consequences in the future. The future! how I pity those who await it, if they love you. Adieu; I have company in my room. Ah, how irksome it is to live in society when one has but one thought.

Half-past nine o'clock, 1776.

I know it well; you write me charming notes, but you leave me to die. I am cold, so cold that my thermometer is twenty degrees lower than that of Réaumur. This concentrated cold, this state of perpetual torture, throw me into such deep discouragement that I have no strength to desire a better condition. In fact, what is there to desire? That which remains for me to feel is worth no more than what I have already felt. Ah, yes! let me cease to be! I do not

repulse your pity, or your generosity. I should feel I did you harm in refusing them; keep the illusion that you are able to comfort me.

1776.

I am chilled, I tremble, I die of cold, I am bathed in sweat. You revive that part of me which suffers most; my heart is cold, and wrung, and agonized; I might say, like that mad soul in Bedlam, "It suffers so that it will burst."—*Mon ami!* it seems to me a century has passed since yesterday; I fear I may not reach this evening; then I shall see you, and my pain will lessen. My God! I have not strength enough to bear my soul, it kills me. Good-day, *mon ami;* I love you better and more than you have ever loved. Yes, I suffer, I cough, but I shall see you. You will be active enough between now and this evening; and I, I shall have but one thought, making me repeat incessantly, "Ah! for the sad how slow the hours fly."

Mon ami, see if you can dine with me to-morrow or Monday at the Comte de C . . .'s. Choose your day; I would rather it were Monday, but you shall decide.

One o'clock, 1776.

If any kindness remains in you, ah! pity me; I cannot answer you, I know nothing more; body and soul are both annihilated. That lease? break it; bind me; do what you will; all is to me beyond indifference. Ah! my God! I know myself no more.

1776.

You are mistaken; it is not I who am necessary to you; but no matter as you wish it I will expect you and pass the evening with you. But it is, in truth, sacrificing my rest to you; I regret it, because it is doing nothing for your happiness. There are two sorts of things in nature which cannot tolerate

mediocrity, and you lead me to that quality which I detest and for which my soul was never made. Oh, heaven! why did I ever know you? I should never have felt remorse, and I should not now be living. And see with what you fill my life and my soul! I make you no reproaches, but I express the keen regret I feel for the terrible mistake into which I fell.

Bring back to me the letter of the Comtesse de Boufflers. M. de Vaines will not come this evening; he stayed yesterday till eleven o'clock; he charged me to remind you of Monday, because he did not know where you were lodging.

1776.

I send away M. de La Rochefoucauld that I may answer you. Your kindness, this active interest touches me deeply; but, *mon ami*, if the feeling that you have for me is painful to you and sorrowful, I must wish to see it chilled; for it would be dreadful to see you suffer. Ah! we ought both to have the same regret; the day we met was a fatal day; why did I not die before it dawned? — My day has been filled with pain and, what is quite extraordinary, with a depression that I did not think could be allied with active suffering.

What sad pleasure I had in again seeing Mme. Geoffrin! it did me harm; I saw that her end was nearer than even mine. I have never been able to master tears; they conquered me before her, and I was grieved. Ah! my bonds are too strong, they are fastened too directly to my heart; it seems as though I ought to have but one regret, one sorrow, and yet I often find my soul all living with affections and with interests that rend it. If you continue to grieve over my troubles you will make me feel the duration of them intolerable. I know you well, *mon ami;* my death will

be a trouble for you; but the rapidity of your ideas assures me that you are forever sheltered from great sorrows. Ah! so much the better; I bless God for it.

Eleven o'clock, 1776.

Why do you suppose that I am prompted by a dreadful sentiment? See better. Should I have strength for it, even if I had the inclination? and besides, there would be a lack of delicacy in showing resentment now, when I have reached a point where I have no longer need of defence or vengeance. *Mon ami*, I am dying; that fills all, and it settles all. But do you know what must be done for that frightful feeling you suppose me to have? — a sedative for your feelings, to which my danger has given a moment's vigour. You must chill yourself, harden yourself, and flee the unhappy being who sheds around her only sadness and fear; you must bring yourself to a state of mind in which, when the event happens, you will feel no further ill-effects. This is what my generosity and my interest in your peace of mind lead me to counsel you, and I do it from the bottom of my soul. Do not oppose me on the moral side. *Mon ami*, you owe nothing to one who has renounced all; all compact, all bond between us, everything is broken. You surely see it; my soul is now impenetrable to consolation; scarcely do I dare to hope for a few moments' respite from my physical ills. I think them as incurable as those of my heart.

I have yielded to friendship in seeing Bordeu [physician, friend of d'Alembert]. Before long the same friendship will groan at the uselessness of that succour. Good-night; I suffer much; I wish that you may never have to say the same.

Half-past ten o'clock, 1776.

I could neither read, nor write, nor dictate at eight o'clock when I received your note; I was in a paroxysm of cough-

ing and pain which did not allow me to open the letter till an hour later. This morning my pains became so severe that I was threatened with inflammation. I tried all remedies to obtain relief; and in such a crisis you see, of course, that my door was closed necessarily. The Archbishop of Aix and two other persons came before you did. Why should I exclude you? — because you did not see me yesterday? Such thoughts, such emotions only come when we believe ourselves loved, and above all when we expect pleasure; but now, in my state, there can be none. I long only for relief.

Do not come to-morrow morning; my door will be closed without exception till four o'clock. I am no longer mistress of my ills; they have taken possession of me, and I yield to them. Do not think that I have no desire to see you; but I grieve for the melancholy manner in which you would have to pass your evening with me; whereas at home you are surrounded with all sorts of pleasure. No sacrifices, *mon ami;* the sick repulse such efforts — although so few are made for them!

1776.

Friendship does miracles. Here is the matter: the Vicomte de Chamans has asked for a furlough; if he does not obtain it and is not able to go to Monaco, he is a lost man. He has the fatal experience of the last two winters. I do not say to you, "Ask for his furlough," because that may not be the best thing to do. But speak of his bad health, of the danger he is running, especially in an air that is deadly to him. In short, *mon ami*, plead for his life; it will be averting from the remainder of mine one of the deepest sorrows I can henceforth feel. Ask Baron d'Holbach to unite his efforts with yours, and tell the effect of the sea (which he has seen) on this unfortunate young man.

I am awaiting news of you, because you promised them to me; though I think it much sweeter and more natural to talk with her who has consecrated her life to you than with me who am about to part with mine. Ah! I can no more — and *that is true.* Good-night.

1776.

Yesterday I was lost in the void; that degree of depression resembles death, but, unhappily, it is not death. At six o'clock I thought you might perhaps be very near to me, but even so, you may have been far away in thought, for persons in the same room are often little together. *Mon ami,* do not come at ten o'clock at night; come earlier. Do you know what inures me a little to your hardships? it is that M. de Condorcet, who goes on foot to Nogent every week, tells me that those walks have strengthened him perceptibly. His walk is four leagues long; I think your street is too far off; you ought to come in a carriage and dismiss it at my door.

As a favour bring me this evening your journey to Prussia and Vienna. Yes, I want it just as it is; if you say no, we shall quarrel.

Monday, ten o'clock in the morning, 1776.

Mon ami, you have seen me very weak, very unhappy. Usually your presence suspends my ills, and arrests my tears. To-day I succumb, and I know not which, my soul or my body, gives me the most pain. This condition is so deep-seated that I have just refused the comforts of friendship; I prefer to be alone, and talk with you a moment before I go to bed, to the sweetness and sadness of complaining and obliging others to share my pain.

I have just remembered that you told me you liked to stay at home on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Your kindness made you forget it, and now I give you back your promise. *Mon*

ami, never did I less desire that you should make sacrifices to me. Alas! you see yourself if I am in a condition to enjoy; I can only cry to you, "Do not reopen my wound." All my desires are limited to that.

It seems to me that, if you were willing, your trips to Versailles might be less frequent. — *Mon ami*, if you come to me to-morrow, bring me the rest of your "Journey," and my blue pamphlet; if you have the latter at hand give it to my servant. — *Mon ami*, have you sent my note to the landlord of this house? How often I regret the trouble which I gave you about this lodging. Adieu. I have not, truly, the strength to hold my pen; all my faculties are employed in suffering. Ah! I have reached the end of life, where it is almost as painful to die as to live; I fear pain too much; the troubles of my soul have exhausted all my strength. *Mon ami*, sustain me; but do not suffer; for that would become my keenest pain. I repeat to you heartily, sincerely, do not take to-morrow evening from your family; to-morrow is Tuesday.

1776.

How like you that is! so beyond all measure; sending twice in one night! Ah! best of men! — Yes, calm yourself; I repeat, you will increase my ills; your grief does me harm, much harm. I have just taken sedatives; I am not yet relieved. I am in my bed, and I shall think much of the sorrow you are feeling. — Do not come before midday. Adieu.

Four o'clock, 1776.

You are too kind, too amiable, *mon ami*. You are seeking to revive, to sustain a soul which succumbs at last beneath the weight and duration of its suffering. I know all the value of your feeling, though I do not any longer seek it. There was a time when to be loved by you would have left

me nothing to desire, or, at least, would have softened all bitterness; I should have wished to live. To-day I wish only to die. There is no compensation, no alleviation for the loss that I have met with; I ought not to have survived it. That, *mon ami,* is the only bitter feeling that I find in my soul to you. — I would I could know your fate; I wish that you may be happy.

I received your letter at one o'clock; I had a burning fever. I cannot tell you the time it took and the difficulty I had to read it. I would not put it off until to-day, and the effort threw me almost into delirium. I expect more news of you to-night. Adieu, *mon ami.* If ever I returned to life I would again employ it in loving you — but there is now no time.

A Monsieur

Monsieur le Marquis de
Condorcet
rue Louis le grand. /.[1]

[1] Facsimile of the handwriting of Mlle. de Lespinasse and of her seal.

ce mercredi

j'ai eu tort de peines. le bon
condorcet n'a point de reproches a
me faire; a moins qu'il n'ait oublié
son petit billet d'hier au soir, mais
ce sera par lui que j'aurai, soit alors
a qui il s'adressait, j'ai tout ouvert
d'epaisse dont la tête la tournait par
ainsi ne pas voir, je dine chez elle
goffin, a cinq heures je suis chez elle
de mes choses. a six je rentre chez
moi, et je vois a. neuf et un quart passés
le diner chez elle barton. voyés bon
condorcet qui bat tous mes accès, car
je peux parler et je dirigerai encore
pas tout gâché, je vous demandais
vingt paroles, je me contenterai
de quatre mots et je vous en dirai
tout le fond de mon cœur je vous aime

PORTRAIT OF MLLE. DE LESPINASSE.

BY D'ALEMBERT.

[Portraits of the living and Eulogies of the dead were a fashion of the period; the Eulogies were usually offered for competition and read before the French Academy; the Portraits circulated in the salons or were given to their originals. Mlle. de Lespinasse wrote one on the Marquis de Condorcet. That of herself by d'Alembert was addressed to her in 1771, and first published in his "Œuvres Posthumes" in 1799. The "Eulogy of Eliza," by M. de Guibert, appeared for the first time in a collection of Eulogies written by him and published by his widow in 1806, before her publication of the Letters, edited by Barrère, in 1809. The name Eliza is given in memory of Eliza Draper, the friend of Sterne, the favourite author of Mlle. de Lespinasse. At the close of the Eulogy M. de Guibert names her Claire-Françoise, and no explanation is given of this misnomer. The Address to her Manes by d'Alembert appeared first in his Posthumous Works above-mentioned.]

TIME and habit, which change all things, Mademoiselle, which destroy our opinions and our illusions, which annihilate or enfeeble love itself, can do nothing against the feeling that I have for you, which you have inspired in me for the last sixteen years; that feeling is strengthened more and more by the knowledge that I have of the lovable and solid qualities that form your character; it makes me feel at this moment the pleasure of occupying my mind with you that I may paint you such as I see you.

You say you do not wish me to limit myself to making half your portrait by writing a panegyric; you wish the shadows to be in it, apparently to put in relief the truth of the rest; and you order me to tell you your faults, and even, if occasion be, your vices, should I know of any. I know of none, and I am almost sorry, so eager am I to obey you. Of faults, I know several, and some of them are quite displeasing to those who love you. Do you think that declaration too coarse? I could wish that you had other defects than those for which I must blame you. I would like to find in you those faults that make us lovable, that are the effect of passions; for I own that I like defects of that nature; but, unhappily, those for which I have to blame you are not of it; they prove, perhaps (I whisper this in your ear), that passion is not in you.

I shall not speak to you of your face; you make no pretensions for it, and besides, it is a matter of which an old and sad philosopher like me takes no heed; he is no judge, he may even pique himself on his lack of judgment, be it ineptitude, be it vanity, which you please. I shall, however, say of your exterior, what seems to me to strike every one, that you have much nobleness and grace in your bearing, and (what is far preferable to cold beauty) much expression and soul in your countenance. I could name to you more than one of your friends who would have for you something other than friendship did you permit it.

The liking one has for you does not depend exclusively on your external charms; it is, above all, derived from those of your mind and your nature. Your mind pleases, and ought to please, through many fine qualities, by the excellence of your tone, by the correctness of your taste, by the art you have of saying to each that which suits him.

The excellence of your tone would not be praise for a per-

son born at Court, who can speak and act only in the manner she has learned; you, on the contrary, came from the depths of a province, where you had no one to teach you. Nevertheless, you were as perfect on this point the morrow of your arrival in Paris as you are to-day. From that first day you have been as free, as little out of place, in the most brilliant and most fastidious society as if you had lived in it all your life; you felt its usages before you knew them; which reveals an accuracy and delicacy of tact that is very uncommon, and also an exquisite knowledge of conventions. In a word, you divined the language of what is called "good society" just as Pascal in his "Provincials" divined the French language, which was not formed in his day, and the tone of polite pleasantry, which he certainly could have learned from no one in the retreat where he lived. But as you thoroughly feel that you have this merit, and even that in you it is not an ordinary merit, you have perhaps the defect of attaching too much value to it in others; they must have many real qualities to make you pardon the absence of this one; on this point, of little importance, you are pitiless to the extent of being finical.

Yes, Mademoiselle, the only thing on which you are over-delicate, and over-delicate to the point of being *odious* (here I am like Mme. Bertrand in the comedy; "I start with invectives" because I am defending my own hearthstone), is your extreme sensitiveness to what is called "good style" in manners and speech; the lack of that quality you think scarcely effaced by the truest sentiment that can be shown to you. On the other hand, there are men in whom the presence of that quality supplies the lack of all the others; you know them such as they are, weak, selfish, full of airs, incapable of deep and consistent feeling, but agreeable and full of graces, and you have a great inclination to prefer

them to your faithful and more sincere friends; with a few more cares and attentions for you they might eclipse all others in your eyes, and perhaps take the place of all.

The same correct taste which has given you so great a sense of the usages of society, shows itself, as a general thing, in your judgment of books. You are seldom mistaken; and you would be even less so if you were always firmly of your own opinion and did not judge by that of persons at whose feet your intellect has the kindness to prostrate itself, though they are very far from possessing the gift of infallibility. You do them sometimes the honour to wait for their advice to form an opinion which is not worth that which you would have formed for yourself.

You have still another fault; it is to prepossess yourself or, as they say, infatuate yourself, to excess in favour of certain works. You judge with sufficient justice and accuracy of all books in which there is a moderate degree of feeling and warmth; but when those two qualities dominate certain parts of the work, all its blemishes, however considerable they may be, at once disappear to you; it is "perfect" in your eyes; you need more time and cooler judgment to see it as it really is. I must add, however, to console you for this censure, that all that belongs to sentiment, to feeling, is a matter in which you are never mistaken; it may be called your domain.

What distinguishes you above all in society is the art of saying to each one that which suits him; and this art, though little common, is very simple in you; it consists in never speaking of yourself to others, but much of them. That is your infallible means of pleasing; consequently you please widely, though it is very far from everybody who pleases you; you even defer to persons who are the least agreeable to you. This desire to please every one made you say a

thing which might give a bad opinion of you to those who did not know you thoroughly. "Ah!" you exclaimed one day, "how I wish I knew everybody's foible!" That wish seemed to come from consummate policy, and a policy that bordered on duplicity; nevertheless you have no duplicity in you; your policy is simply the desire to be thought agreeable; and you desire this, not through a feeling of vanity, from which you are only too far removed, but through your liking and need to shed more charm over your daily life.

Though you please every one in general, yet you please agreeable people specially; and you please them by the effect which they produce on you, by the species of enjoyment which their self-love derives from seeing how much you feel their charm; you have the air of being grateful to them for those charms, as if they were for you only, and you thus double, so to speak, the pleasure they have in feeling that they are charming.

The refinement of taste, which is coupled in you with this continual desire to please, results, on the one hand, in there being nothing studied or laboured about you, while on the other hand, there is nothing careless; hence it may be said of you that you are very *natural*, and not at all *simple*.

Discreet, prudent, and reserved, you possess the art of controlling yourself without effort, and of hiding your feelings without dissimulating them. True and frank with those you esteem, experience has rendered you distrustful with others; but this characteristic, which is a vice when we begin life, is a precious quality in those who have lived.

Nevertheless, this care, this circumspection in society, which are usual in you, do not prevent you from being sometimes inconsiderate. It has happened, though in truth very rarely, that you have suffered certain speeches to escape you in presence of certain persons which have injured you much

with those persons; this comes from your being frank by nature, and discreet from reflection only; nature will escape sometimes in spite of all our efforts.

The various contrasts offered by your character, of naturalness without simplicity, of reserve and imprudence, contrasts which come in you from the struggle between art and nature, are not the only ones that exist in your manner of being; you have others, and always from the same cause. You are both gay and melancholy — gay by nature, melancholy from reflection; your fits of melancholy are the result of the many misfortunes you have met with; your physical or your mental condition of the moment gives birth to them; you yield yourself to them with dolorous, and at the same time such deep satisfaction that you will hardly allow yourself to be snatched from melancholy by gaiety; while, on the contrary, you fall back with a species of pleasure from gaiety to melancholy.

Though you are not always melancholy, you are perpetually filled by another feeling that is sadder still: disgust of life; and that disgust so seldom leaves you that, if in a gay mood some one proposed to you to die, you would consent without difficulty. This feeling is derived from the deep and keen impression that your sorrows have left upon you; even your affections, the species of passion which you put into them, cannot remove it; it is plain that sorrows, if I may so say it, have *fed* you, and that affections can do no more than comfort you.

It is not only by your charm and your intellect that you please generally; it is also by your character. Though much alive to the ridiculous, no one is farther than you from casting ridicule on others; you abhor malignity and satire; you hate no one — unless it may be one woman, who has, in truth, done all she could to make you hate her; but even so,

your hatred to her is not active, though hers to you has reached the point of being ridiculous and of making that woman extremely unhappy.

You have another very rare quality, especially in a woman: you are not in any way envious; you do justice, with the sincerest satisfaction, to the charms and good qualities of all the women whom you know; you do this even to your enemy in all she has that is good and estimable, agreeable and piquant.

Nevertheless, — for I must not flatter you, even in saying what is true of you, — that good quality, rare as it is, is perhaps less praiseworthy in you than it would be in many others. If you are not envious it is not exactly because you think it right that others should have advantages over you; it is that looking around you, all existing beings seem to you equally to be pitied, and you feel that there are none with whom you would desire to change situations. If there were, or you knew a being sovereignly happy, you would perhaps be very capable of bearing him envy; you have often been heard to say that it was just that persons who have great advantages should also have great sorrows to console those who were tempted to be jealous of them. I do not think, however, that your lack of jealousy ceases to be a virtue, though its source may not be as pure as it might be; for how many persons there are who do not believe that others are happy, and who would not desire to be in their place, and yet are jealous of them.

Your aversion to malignancy and envy presupposes in you a noble soul; and yours is such in every respect. Though you desire fortune and have need of it, you are incapable of taking any action to procure it; you have not even profited by the favourable occasions which you have had at times to make yourself a happier lot.

Not only is your soul very lofty, it is also very sensitive; but your sensitiveness is to you a torture, not a pleasure. Your are convinced that happiness comes only through the passions, and you know the danger of the passions too well to yield to them. You therefore love only so far as you dare; but you love all that you can and as much as you can. You give to your friends out of the sensibility that overloads you all that you can permit yourself to give; but there still remains a superabundance which you know not what to do with, and which you would willingly fling, so to speak, to all passers. This superabundance of sensibility renders you very compassionate to the unhappy, even to those you do not know; you think no trouble too great to comfort them. With that disposition, it is natural that you should be very obliging; and no one can do you a greater pleasure than to furnish you the occasion; it is giving food to both your kindness and your natural energy. I have said that you give to your friends "all the feelings that you can permit yourself to give;" you even grant them something beyond what they think they have a right to expect; you defend them with courage, under all circumstances and states of the case, whether they are right or wrong. It may not be the best way to serve them; but so many persons abandon their friends, even when they could and ought to defend them, that we should be grateful to your friendship which abhors and flees that baseness, even to excess.

The species of muffled, intestine emotion which agitates your soul incessantly makes it not as equable internally as it outwardly seems, even to your friends. You are often sharp and out of humour; but in consequence of your desire to please generally you let this be seen by none but the author of this portrait; it is true that you do justice to his friendship in not fearing to let him see you such as you are; but

this very friendship feels itself obliged to tell you that sharpness and ill-humour take away from you many a charm; therefore, in the interests of your own self-love, friendship counsels to you to give way to this defect as little as you can, unless your friends deserve it; which can happen very rarely, thanks to the deep and just feelings that fill their souls for you. You admit this baleful sharpness, and it is right in you to do so; what would be better still would be to correct it.

To dispense with doing that, you try to persuade yourself it is incorrigible, and belongs to your nature. I think you deceive yourself; it belongs much more to the situation in which you are placed. You were born with a tender, gentle, sensitive soul; it has been too severely tried, and the effects upon you have been too cruel. You may say what you please; extreme sensibility excludes innate sharpness. That vile fault is therefore not the work of nature in you, but (what is dreadful) the work of others. Through being thwarted, shocked, wounded in all your sentiments and all your tastes, you grew accustomed to attach yourself to nothing; through repressing the sentiments that might have made your misery, you numbed those which would have shed softness into your soul. They remained, as it were, asleep in the depths of your nature, without motion, without energy; and you prepared much harm for your friends when you took shelter from that which your enemies were seeking to do to you. In striving to make yourself hard to yourself you have become so to those who love you.

It is true — for the sentiment is not annihilated in you, only dormant — that you never fail to repent of the grief that your sharpness causes whenever you see that the impression is deep; you then recover your natural sensibility; one moment, one word, repairs all. In other people the first impulse is the effect of nature, the second is that of reflection;

with you it is the contrary; and such is, in your soul, otherwise so estimable, the cruel and unfortunate effect of habit.

Another proof that this sharpness is not natural to you is that other defect for which I have already blamed you, which is almost the opposite of this one; I mean the commonplace desire of pleasing all about you. This last defect belongs far more to your nature than the first; it has given to your mind the qualities most fitted to please, — nobleness, accomplishment, grace. It is very natural that you should try to gain the good of it, and you succeed but too well. I know no one, I repeat, who pleases so generally as you, and few who feel the pleasure of it more; you do not even refuse to make advances when they are not made previously to you; on this point your pride is sacrificed to your vanity. Sure of preserving those whom you have once acquired, you are principally occupied by acquiring others; you are not, it must be allowed, as fastidious in your selections as you should be. The refinement and nicety of your tact ought to make you sensitive on the choice and style of acquaintances; but the desire to have a court and what society calls friends makes you rather easy in your selections, and you are not much annoyed by tiresome persons provided such persons pay you attention.

Names and titles do not impress you; you receive the great as they should be received, without servility and without disdain. Misfortune has given you the honourable pride which it inspires always in those who have not deserved it. Your small means and the sad knowledge you have of men make you dread benefits, the yoke of which is often to be feared for well-born souls; perhaps you have carried this feeling to excess; but in this respect excess is a virtue.

Your courage is greater than your strength; indigence, ill-health, misfortunes of all kinds have tried your patience

without dejecting it. That interesting patience, and the spectacle of what you have suffered ought to make you friends, and has made them; you have found some consolation in their attachment and their esteem.

There, Mademoiselle, is what you seem to me to be. You are not perfect, no doubt; and it is, truly, so much the better for you; the perfect Grandison has always seemed to me an odious personage. I do not know if I see you aright; but such as I see you no one seems to me more worthy to experience in herself and to make others experience that which alone can soften the ills of life, — the comforts of tenderness and confidence.

In finishing this portrait I cannot add, in the words of the old song: —

"The prior who made it
Is satisfied with it,"

but I feel that I can apply to you, and with all my heart, Dufresny's lines: —

"What faults she has,
That youthful thing! We love her with them."

THE EULOGY OF ELIZA.

By M. DE GUIBERT.

What darkness! what solitude! dreadful emblem of my heart! To-morrow the night that surrounds me will have passed, but the night that enfolds Eliza is eternal! to-morrow the universe will waken again; Eliza alone will never waken.

Soul sublime, where art thou? in what region? Ah! thou hast returned to thy source; thou hast taken thy flight to thy native country! An emanation from heaven, heaven has recalled thee. It had left thee too long to dwell among men.

Yes, without a decree of heaven Eliza could not have fallen a prey to death. She was so active, so animated, so living! Alas! for the last two years her soul deceived my anxiety and allayed my fears. Daily I saw her fading and weakening, but never was her mind more brilliant, never was her heart so loving. "She will live, she will live," I said to myself on quitting her. "So much life must surely conquer death." I could no more conceive the idea of her dying than that of the sun extinguished.

Eliza is no more! who will enlighten my judgment, who will warm my imagination, who will spur me to glory, who will replace in me the profound sentiment with which she inspired me? What shall I do with my soul and with my life? O my heart! recall to my thoughts what she was! I wish to extol her, and to extol her I need only paint her. Eliza can never die in the memory of her friends, but her

friends will some day die as she has died, and I wish her to live in the future; I wish that after me some tender soul, reading this funeral dirge, may regret that he never knew her, and pity my misfortune in surviving her.

Eliza related to me several times the first years of her life. All that we see in our theatres, all that we read in our novels, how cold and barren they are beside that narrative! We must penetrate the interior of families to see the great scenes of passion and human calamities. Our writers mar them with their imagination; none but their actors and their victims can picture them. Eliza was born under the auspices of love and misfortune. Her mother was a woman of a great name, living separate from her husband. She brought-up this daughter publicly, as though she had the right to acknowledge her as her own, and she kept from her knowledge the mystery of her birth. But often, in secret, she bathed her with tears; she seemed, in redoubling her tenderness, to wish to compensate her for the fatal gift she had made her of life. She loaded her with caresses and benefits. She gave her, herself, the first of all benefits, an excellent education; it was soon to be all that remained of her. She died almost suddenly, and at the moment when she was about to endeavour to give her daughter the social position that the laws might perhaps have granted her. Eliza was left abandoned to relatives who soon were no other than persecutors. They told her what she was; from the position of a cherished daughter she descended, suddenly, and in the same house, to that of orphan and stranger. Disdainful and brutal pity took charge of the unfortunate girl, until then so tenderly cared for by remorse and by natural love; she lived, because she was then of an age when unhappiness does not kill, or, to speak more truly, when there is no such thing as unhappiness.

She was far from beautiful, and her features were still further marred by the small-pox; but her plainness had nothing repulsive at the first glance; at the second the eye grew accustomed to it, and as soon as she spoke it was forgotten. She was tall and well-made. I did not know her until she was thirty-eight years old, and her figure was still noble and full of grace. But what she possessed, what distinguished her above all, was that chief charm without which beauty is but a cold perfection — expression of countenance [*physionomie*]. Hers had no particular character; it united all. Thus one could not say precisely that it was clever, or brilliant, or sweet, or noble, or refined, or gracious, — a species of praise by which, as I think, we degrade the faces we wish to praise; for when a face has an habitual expression, that expression is more the effect of conformation and what may be called style of feature, than *physionomie* — revelation of nature. That revelation on the countenance comes from within, it is born of thought, it is mobile and fugitive; it escapes the eye and mocks the brush. O Eliza, Eliza, whoso has not had the happiness to live in your intimacy, in your affections, your emotions, your confidence, knows nothing of what is meant by expression of countenance. I have seen faces animated by intellect, by passion, by pleasure, by pain; but lights and shades were all unknown to me until I knew Eliza. That flame of heaven, that energy of feeling, — in short, if I may so express it, that abundance of life, — Eliza, when she was not overwhelmed by troubles, shed on all that she wished to animate; but she wished nothing for herself; she animated all without personal pretensions or projects. One never approached her soul without feeling drawn by it. I have known apathetic hearts which she electrified; I have seen dull minds that her companionship had elevated. "Eliza," I said to her once, after seeing her perform that operation,

"you make marble feel and matter think." What must have been that celestial soul for him whom she had made its first object, for him who animated her soul in return!

O thou who wert that object, Gonsalve! [M. de Mora] happy Gonsalve! thou must have felt thyself beneath the burning climate of the equator, beloved by a daughter of the Sun. Death removed thee in the midst of thy career, but thou hadst, in those few years, exhausted all the happiness that heaven grants to man on earth: thou wert loved by Eliza. Ah! if thou couldst know what she became after thee! she lived for two years withered by sorrow, bearing the wound of grief like a tree struck by lightning, and she ended blessing death as she expired.

It might be thought that Eliza, thus eagerly occupied by one object, was less than before to her friends; but never did she love them better, never was she dearer to them. Passion and misfortune seemed to have given to her soul fresh activity, new vigour. Ah! who like her could make us taste the charms of friendship? who knew like her how to approach the hearts of those she loved? She drew confidence so gently; she understood so well the language of passion. With whatever sentiment the soul was filled she made it feel it needed to communicate with hers; and each was happier, or less unhappy, beside her. Were we in that state of languor which is the habitual condition of persons in society when they have neither pleasure nor pain, in Eliza's presence we came out of it; for, seeing her suffering and unhappy, we were filled with a sense of her sorrows, or — as happened oftener — her mind and soul took the ascendency, and then what interest! what conversation! In spite of one's self one had to listen, to think, to revive.

Often, in comparing Eliza with the charming women and the men of intellect whom I have known, I try to explain

to myself the principle of that charm which no one possessed as she did, and here is what, it seems to me, it consisted in: she was always free from personality, and always natural. *Free from personality:* never was any one as much so. With her friends it was from feeling; she had always more need to speak to them of their selves than of herself; with the rest of the world it was from delicacy of mind and judgment. She knew that the great secret of pleasing was in forgetting self to give our interest to others, and she forgot herself perpetually. She was the soul of a conversation, but she never made herself its object. Her great art lay in showing the minds of others to advantage; she enjoyed that more than to show her own. *Always natural:* she was that in her bearing, in her movements, in her gestures, in her thoughts, in her expressions, in her style; and at the same time this naturalness had something that was elegant, noble, sweet, gay; part of it was no doubt perfected by a sound education, an exquisite taste, by the habits of her youth passed in the best company, and among the most agreeable persons of her day; but it had become so a part of herself that we never felt that art had aught to do with it; an amiable delusion which vanishes as to most women when we converse with them for any length of time.

What struck me most in conversing with Eliza was the relation, the harmony, so to speak, that reigned between her thoughts and their expression. When animated by her mind, or by her heart, her motions, her face, — all, even to the tones of her voice, was in perfect accord with her words. It is from lack of this accord that the conversation of so many persons of mind and talent is without warmth and without effect. . . . Again, what Eliza possessed in a supreme degree was tact, — so rare and so difficult in dealing with persons and conventions. Never was she mistaken; never did she

say a thing of feeling to one who could not feel it, or express a noble thought to those who could not understand it. Her conversation was neither above nor below those to whom she spoke. She seemed to have the secret of all natures, the measure and the shades of all minds.

Eliza was not learned; she was well-informed and made no pretension in being so. Her knowledge was based so securely in her mind, and her mind so ruled her, that it was always she, and not her knowledge, that we felt the most. She knew English and Italian and read the literatures of several other languages in our best translations. But, above all, she knew her own language perfectly. She made several definitions of synonyms which the Abbé Girard and the best minds of the Academy would not have disowned. I never knew any one to have as she had the precious gift of the *right word*, — that gift without which we cannot have either accuracy or gradation of expression; a gift which presupposes equally a trained mind, a profound knowledge of grammar, and — independently of natural good taste — that perfected and conventional taste which can be acquired only by intercourse with men of letters and men of the world both.

The best-written books have their moments of tedium and their lacunæ of interest. Eliza's conversation, whenever she would or could give herself up to it wholly, had none. She said simple things, but she never said them in a common way, and that art — which seemed no art at all in her — never made itself felt, and never let her drop into mannerism or affectation. She used no novel terms and employed no antitheses or double-meanings. She sometimes applauded a play on words by others, but it had to be appropriate, in good taste, or else said naturally, on the spur of the moment and with ease, which to her eyes was always a chief

merit in all things; for pretension, of whatever kind it was, was repugnant to her. She could not endure whatever showed effort and preparation. She would almost have preferred the rough and sketchy to what was too graceful, too finished. Hence we may suppose how she hated the affected manners, the airs, and other follies of people in society.

She had the same delicacy, the same severity of taste about works of the mind. She was never able to accustom herself to the verses of Cardinal de Bernis, Dorat, and other poets of that school. She thought nothing of the novels of Crébillon, Marivaux, and all those to which their style had given birth; but, on the other hand, she fed herself with Racine, Voltaire, and La Fontaine. She knew them by heart; she grew impassioned over Jean-Jacques, she loved Le Sage and Prévost; but she put above them all the immortal Richardson; and Sterne she had read, re-read, translated, and adored. It was she who made in Paris the reputation of the "Sentimental Journey." Unequal works, imperfect, fantastic even, obtained favour in her eyes provided she found in them traits of genius or sensibility. It was thus she had the patience to decipher "Tristram Shandy." The death of Manon in the "Paysan Perverti," made her defend that work, filled in other parts with ridiculous and commonplace things.

Oh! how she was the friend of what was good in all directions! how she enjoyed, how she knew how to praise what had pleased her, — above all, what had touched her! What need she had to communicate her feeling to all whom she thought capable of sharing it! And it was not only for works of literature that she grew impassioned: all the arts of taste and beauty had claims upon her. A fine picture, a good piece of sculpture, excellent music soothed and delighted her; and in those different arts she was moved by

all styles. She admired the mausoleum of Cardinal de Richelieu, and the little dying bird of Houdon went to her heart; she could passionately admire Rubens, and the next moment she enjoyed a miniature by Petitot; the music of Grétry enchanted her, but on the morrow an air from Orpheus was to her the music of heaven. She never confounded these styles; she felt them all and in feeling them she judged them. . . .

She was accused of enthusiasm and prejudice in her feelings. People declared that they could not conceive how her heart could suffice for so many friends. Narrow and vulgar minds, was it for you to measure and comprehend hers? In the first place, all her feelings were not passions. It was with her feelings as with her tastes, they had different degrees according to the difference in their essence. She loved from esteem, from attraction, from gratitude. She loved in Areste [d'Alembert] genius united to virtue; in Sainval [probably himself] a soul of fire which had, perhaps, some affinity with hers; in Cléon, Ergaste, Valère, etc., such or such quality of mind or nature which justified her *penchant.* O you who were her friends, say if ever one of you had cause to blame her friendship! did it not seem to you, when suffering, ill, or unhappy, that you were her first object? She bound us to one another by an interest of which she was the mainspring and the goal. We felt ourselves friends in her house because we were there united by the same sentiments, — the desire to please her and the need of loving her. Alas! how many persons saw one another, sought one another, suited one another through her, who will never see, or suit, or seek themselves again! The charm of her circle was so in *her* that the persons who composed it were not the same as they were elsewhere. It was only in her presence that they had their full value. "We are separated," I said yester-

day, bursting into tears, to her friends gathered around her at the moment of her death; "we may apply to ourselves the words of Scripture: 'The Lord hath smitten the shepherd, and the flock is scattered.'"

Eliza's mind, kindly and animated as it was, united to those qualities precision and solidity. She had never cultivated the exact sciences; but she studied moral questions, she loved sound metaphysics, and read Montaigne much. She knew Locke, before Rousseau, under pleasanter forms [in "Émile"], had made him pass into our language. She took delight in Tacitus, and in Montesquieu. One of the living authors whom she esteemed the most was the Abbé de Condillac. All that was strong pleased her nature; all that was subtle or profound pleased her mind.

So many natural and acquired advantages might have justified in Eliza an emotion of pride, but she never had it. She who felt and judged so well of the minds of others seemed to ignore her own, and even to distrust it; thus she wrote nothing for the public. If sometimes her soul needed to pour itself out, either for her own sake or for that of her friends, she took the greatest care that the secret was known only to them, and she exacted from their friendship that her letters should be either returned to her or destroyed. Divers little works composed by her are, apparently, lost forever, such as three chapters in the style of the "Sentimental Journey," a great number of Synonyms, an Apology for her faults, especially that facility for enthusiasm and infatuation with which she was reproached, — a charming bit of writing addressed to me, of which I was too scrupulous to take a copy. She had also begun the memoirs of her life, or rather of her passion for Gonsalve; for she began them at that epoch, as if her life had dated, to her eyes, from the moment only when she knew him. But what are most to

be regretted, because they would have formed a vast and varied and most precious collection, are her letters. They had a character, a touch, a style, which had no model and could not, I believe, have imitators. The style was neither that of Mme. de Sévigné nor that of Mme. de Maintenon. It was her own, and, in my opinion, far above theirs. Her letters were fuller, more varied, stronger in thought, drawn more completely from her own being; for she did not live, like those two women, on what was happening at Court and in Europe; her letters were, above all things, living. Ah! it is in *that* that this celestial creature can be compared to no other woman. Her letters had the impulse and the warmth of conversation. They filled the place of absence at the moment of receiving them. I made the tour of Europe and her letters followed me, consoled me, supported me. Alas! I must now expect and hope for them in vain! It is not the seas, not time nor space that parts us, it is that which cannot be seen or measured — it is the unknown and eternal gulf.

So far, I have considered Eliza under the different aspects of her mind only; but what was her mind, compared to her nature and her soul! How can I laud enough her virtues, her lofty spirit, her generosity, her disinterestedness, her benevolence, her love for the unfortunate! Each of those virtues was natural and familiar to her; she practised them as one walks, as one breathes, and she drew no self-praise from them; they never shone in her conversation with pretension or conceit; and this, because the moral of virtues exercised from feeling and from native character never advertises itself; it is only the fictitious virtues which need an outward exhibition.

But to paint the virtues of Eliza it does not suffice to mention them. Each was accompanied by circumstances which

enhanced its merit and its charm. The same virtues in other persons did not produce the same effect. Her soul was strong and lofty. All that was vile and base, or merely petty and feeble, excited her contempt and indignation. She would often have let herself go into vehement pronouncements if the indulgence and amenity of mind which were natural to her had not tempered her first impulse. By this great nobility of soul and character she was, in a way, replaced in the rank where her birth would have put her could it have been recognized; the silence she kept about her fate added to its interest, and the delicate position in which she was never affected injuriously either her own bearing or the consideration in which she was held. She received many women, and women of high rank, with whom she had that noble ease which, accompanying respect, compels a return of consideration from the other person. She paid to their position what she would, if need were, have refused to their pride; but no one was ever tempted to indulge in that sentiment with her. They felt she had other advantages that more than placed her on their level; but she herself never made those advantages felt. They were wrapped in manners so gentle, so amiable, so simple, that they never wounded either pretension or mediocrity.

Oh! how that dignity of soul and character shone in the constant contempt she felt for riches and the means of acquiring it. Her fortune was more than slight. She was surrounded by powerful friends who could have served her in this respect without wounding her delicacy. She asked nothing from them and refused their assistance often. One day I was talking with her on this point and I reproached her for rejecting an offer of service that had just been made to her. "Ah!" I said, "if Gonsalve had made you that offer would you have refused him?" "Yes," she replied, "Gon-

salve more than any one;" and when I exclaimed at that, "Listen, *mon ami*," she said; "I wish, once for all, to explain to you my principles; you may condemn me, but you cannot make me change them." And the next day she wrote me the following letter:—

"Yes, I should have refused that sort of service had Gonsalve offered it, and it is the only one I would not have accepted from him with transport. I know all that can be said against such scruples by philosophy and sentiment, but it is our detestable institutions, it is the corruption of society that forces me to think as I do. Surrounded by other manners and morals, other prejudices than ours, I would have no more scruple in relying on the influence and wealth of Gonsalve than on his courage, his counsels, and all the services he could render me. But in a society and a country where money has become the motive power of all actions, where by its means men can corrupt all hearts and buy all feelings, never shall a vile calculation of self-interest stain my intercourse with those I love. Ah! what would Gonsalve have thought of me had he seen me for one moment resemble in this so many other women? What could then have guaranteed to him the purity of my feeling? Esteem is so delicate a flower that the slightest impairment withers it. Ah! think what sorrow it would have been to me to be lowered in Gonsalve's opinion. I preferred the place I occupied there to the highest throne in the world.

"With regard to my friends, I will own to you that I have always considered equality as the first condition to render friendship durable. Now, it cannot exist from the moment that one friend becomes the benefactor, the other the obliged and beholden. Remember that I am speaking of one kind of benefit only; as for the cares, attentions, counsels, feelings of my friends, I receive them because I can

return them; hence there is reciprocity, and consequently equality between us. But how could I return what they might do to increase my means? I should be, for the rest of my life, ill at ease with them; wherever my affection worked I should fear they saw only my gratitude. In short — and it is a secret of the human heart that I am about to tell you — be sure that, without accounting for it to themselves, without even perceiving it, they would love me less; and as for me, I should feel oppressed by the sort of ascendency I had given them over me.

"If such has been my way of thinking towards him I loved best in the world and towards my friends in general, you can judge how my soul would revolt at the idea of soliciting, or even accepting the services of those who, not being my friends, desire to serve me from foolish conceit, for appearance' sake only, or, I am willing to say, from benevolence. But, in order not to give up my principles, and yet never find myself harassed between necessity and those principles, I have trained myself to order and economy. I, who was brought up in habits of prodigality, I, who from living always with others never knew the cost of anything, I, who through philosophy am led to consider gold as dust beneath my feet, I have subjected and trained myself to reckon incessantly. I manage to reach the end of each year without embarrassments and without debts; hence my friends never hear me speak of my want of means; never does a complaint escape me in their presence, nor a wish — an indirect manner in which persons often solicit services they would not ask openly. My friends see me in such apparent security on this point, and with such freedom of mind, that they must now have forgotten that my means are paltry, and that is what I wish. Finally, whether it is that my delicacy attaches me to poverty, or that being so occupied with active

interests the enjoyments of wealth are nothing to me, or whether, again, it is that, feeling my life so near extinction, I do not think of the future, I protest to you that never once have I had the wish to see my fortune changed."

This was not a mere display of maxims; Eliza's conduct never contradicted those words. I will merely add that her economy was so adroitly managed that it was never felt. She was always simply dressed, but with taste. All that she wore was fresh and well assorted. It gave the idea of richness which was vowed by choice to simplicity. But where her soul and her generosity gave even more illusion as to her means, was when she met with suffering and miserable humanity; never did a poor person go to her without receiving aid. "Ah! if I were only Lord Clive!" she would say on hearing of some unfortunate whom she was unable to help.

All forms of misfortune had rights over the soul of Eliza. By her manner of pitying those who bore them it was plain to see that she had suffered herself. I have often seen her ill, oppressed, sinking under the weight of her own troubles, yet reviving and recovering her strength to feel and share the troubles of others. And this love for the unhappy was not only a virtue in her, it was a passion. Here is what she wrote me, about six months ago, in a letter I have just found and wet with my tears: —

"I sent you a packet this morning; you will think me crazy when you find in it among other things, the 'Gazette de France,' but I send it on account of an article which will do you good [the announcement of the edict about the *corvées*]. How can one fail to be comforted in seeing that so many, many unfortunates are about to be so. This class of interest is now all that can reach my heart. Unhappiness — ah! what empire that word has over me! I think I told

you that I had been to the Invalides a few days ago with the Duchesse de Châtillon; I came away heart-broken. I did not make one step without seeing the most painful sights: blind and mutilated men, frightful wounds, broken limbs. 'Ah! my God!' I thought, 'all that breathe here suffer; and their woes are not the ills of imagination; these are not those who love and torture one another in loving; this is not pain at privation of letters, not even regret for having lost that which was dearest to them; these are bodily ills to which all men are equally subject!' And then I added, to myself: 'yet I am more unhappy than all whom I see here; for I could pity, could console, could relieve these unfortunates with succour and money, but they can do nothing for me; they know not even the language of the ills I suffer; and all there is of happiness, and kinds of happiness upon earth, if all were offered to me, could do me no good.'"

Oh, Eliza! Eliza! how feeble, how imperfect is this poor sketch of thee! Is there an exquisite feeling, a rare virtue that honours humanity, which was not in thy heart? If I do anything that is good, honourable, if I attain to anything that is great it will be because thy memory still perfects and still inspires my soul. Oh, you who were her friends, and whom I have, through her, the right to call my own, let us all address to her memory the same invocation. In Eliza's name let us be friends, let us be dear to one another, let us do in presence of her memory the good we should have wished to do in her living presence; so that from heaven, where her soul has doubtless risen, she may see it and applaud, and men on earth, beholding it, may say of each: "He was Eliza's friend." Let that eulogy be graven on our tombs.

I speak of tombs, and it is of hers that we now must think. Ah! let her mortal remains consume away in the

vault of some temple; it is not there that we must raise her monument; it is not there that her Shade will love to wander. Banks of the Savonnière, meadows of Vaucluse, regions where the souls of Laura and La Suze still breathe, ye are too far away from us. Let us rather choose some solitary grove, through which a rivulet, gently flowing o'er its pebbles, shall murmur ever in its plaintive tones. Come, we will raise a monument, simple as herself, a marble column, broken off breast-high, o'er which the cypresses shall stretch their melancholy arms — But no! it is the tomb of the sinner that needs to go beyond the sight of men. Let us choose for *her* beside some travelled road a little hill, planted with shrubs, at foot of which a limpid spring shall gush; a path, all green, shall lead there; so that the weary traveller, finding shade and water, may rest him with delight and bless her memory, still, like herself, beneficent; and on her tomb be these words graven: —

To the Memory
of Claire-Françoise de Lespinasse,
Taken May 23, 1776,
From her friends, whose happiness she made;
From a choice Society of which she was the bond;
From Letters which she cultivated without pretension:
From the Unhappy, whom she never approached without consoling them.
She died at the age of 42 years. But if to think, to love, to suffer, is that which composes life, she lived in those few years many centuries.

TO THE MANES OF MLLE. DE LESPINASSE.

By D'ALEMBERT.

July 22, 1776.

O you who can no longer hear me, you I have so tenderly and so constantly loved, you by whom I thought for a while I was beloved, you whom I preferred to all things, you who could have been to me all things had you so willed it; alas! if you still can feel, in that abode of death for which you longed and which will soon be mine, behold my sorrow and my tears, the solitude of my soul, the awful void which you have caused, the cruel abandonment in which you have left me!

But why speak to you of the solitude in which I am, since you are no more? Ah! my unjust and cruel friend, had you willed it that crushing solitude might have begun for me while you still existed. Why did you repeat to me, ten months before your death, that I was always what you treasured most, the object most necessary to your happiness, the only one which bound you to life, when you were on the eve of proving to me, so cruelly, the contrary? For what reason, which I can neither imagine nor suspect, did that feeling, so tender for me, which perhaps you felt at the time you assured me of it, change suddenly to estrangement and aversion? What had I done to displease you? Why did you not complain to me if you had anything to complain of? You would have seen to the bottom of my heart, that heart

which has never ceased to be yours, not even when you doubted it and repulsed it harshly. Or, my dear Julie, had you (for I could never do wrong by you) — had you done me some wrong of which I was ignorant, and which it would have been so sweet to pardon had I known of it? You said to one of my friends, who reproached you for the way in which you treated me, and for which you blamed yourself, that the reason of your change to me was because you were unable to bare your soul to me and let me see the wounds that rent it. Ah! you knew by experience that I had closed them more than once, of whatever nature they were.

But why did I not discover myself the pain you felt at being unable to speak to me of your sorrows? Why did I not forestall your confidence, and assist by all of mine the outpouring that you desired to make to me? Twenty times have I been upon the point of throwing myself into your arms and asking you to tell me what was my crime; but I feared that those arms would repulse mine that I held out to you. Your countenance, your words, your silence even, all seemed to forbid me to approach you. I thought sometimes to recall you by my tears, but the sad state of your suffering and destroyed body made me fear to depress you.

For nine months I sought the moment to tell you all I suffered and all I felt; but during those nine months I always found you too feeble to bear the tender reproaches I had to make to you. The only moment when I could have shown to you, uncovered, my dejected and dismayed heart was that dreadful moment when, a few hours before your death, you asked me, in that heart-rending manner, for pardon, — last testimony of your love, the dear and cruel memory of which will ever remain in the depths of my heart. But you had then no longer the strength to either speak to me or

hear me; I was forced, like Phèdre, to deprive myself of tears which would have troubled your last moments; and thus I lost, without recovery, the moment of my life which would have been to me most precious, — that of telling you, once more, how dear you were to me, how much I shared your woes, and how deeply I desired to end my own with you. I would give all the moments that remain to me to live for that one instant which I can never have again, that instant when by showing you all the tenderness of my heart, I might perhaps have recovered yours —

But you are gone! you have descended into the grave convinced that my regrets do not follow you! Ah! if you had only expressed some grief at parting from me, with what delight would I have followed you to that eternal haven which you now inhabit! But I dare not even ask to be laid beside you when death has closed my eyes and stanched my tears; I should fear lest your Shade would still repulse me and prolong my anguish beyond this life.

Alas! you have taken from me everything — the sweetness of life, the sweetness of even death. Cruel and unhappy friend! it seems as if in charging me with the execution of your last wishes you wished to add still further to my pain. Why have the duties thus imposed upon me told me what I ought not to have known, and what I should have desired not to know? Why did you not order me to burn unread that fatal manuscript [probably the Memoir of herself after her connection with M. de Mora], which I believed I could read without finding subjects of pain, but which revealed to me that for eight years at least I was not the first object of your heart, in spite of assurances you had so often given me? What can assure me now, after that grievous discovery, that during the eight or ten other years when I believed myself so much beloved by you, you were not

even then betraying my tenderness? Alas! have I not reason to think it, when I found that among the vast multitude of letters which you charged me to burn, you had not kept a single one of mine? By what ill fate for me had they become so indifferent to you, in spite of the expressions of sensibility, self-abandonment, devotion with which they were filled? Why, in your will, of which you made me the unhappy executor, did you leave to another what would have been to me so dear, — those manuscripts in which there were many things, written by my hand as well as yours, which would have brought you back to me incessantly? What can have chilled you to that degree towards the unfortunate man to whom you said, ten years ago, that your feeling for him made you so happy that it frightened you? . . .

But why reproach you now, when you cannot justify yourself if you do not deserve it? Why trouble your ashes with my regrets when you can no longer solace them? Adieu, adieu forever! my dear and unfortunate Julie! Those two titles affect me far more than your faults towards me can offend me. Enjoy at last, and, to my sorrow, enjoy without me, that repose which my love and my cares were unable to procure for you during life. Alas! why were you unable to love or to be loved in peace? You said to me so many times, and you owned it, sighing, a few months before you died, that, of all the feelings you had inspired, mine for you, and yours for me were the only ones that had not made you unhappy. Why did not that feeling satisfy you? Why was it that love, made to soften all the other ills of life, should have been the torture and the despair of yours? Why, when I gave you my portrait a year ago with the words, —

> "And tell yourself sometimes, in looking at me:
> 'Of all those who love me who loves me as he?'" —

why, I say, did you not see all that I still was for you, all that I wished to be? Why did you think these words mere "kindness;" why did you praise them with that cruel term? But above all, why did you think that happiness and tranquillity were not for you except in death?

Alas! if there still lives something of you, may you enjoy that happiness of which your life let me taste so little and your death makes me lose forever. You have taught me, my dear Julie, that the greatest unhappiness is not to mourn those we love, but to mourn those who have ceased to love us. Alas! I have lost with you sixteen years of my life; who will fill and console the few remaining years of it? O you, whoever you may be who could stanch my tears, in whatever region of the earth you are I would seek you with joy. Ah! hear my sighs, behold my heart, and come to me, or call me to you. Deliver me from the crushing situation in which I am, the dreadful loneliness which makes me say each time that I return to my sad dwelling: "No one is waiting for me; no one will wait for me again." . . .

All things, even our common fate seemed destined to unite us. Both without family, without relatives, having experienced from the moment of our birth neglect, misfortune, and injustice, — Nature seemed to have put us in the world to seek each other out, like two reeds beaten by the wind which cling together and support each other. Why did you seek for other supports? Soon, to your sorrow, those supports failed you; you died believing yourself alone in the world, when you had but to stretch out your hand to take what was so near, but which you would not see. Ah! if your life had been prolonged, perhaps Nature, which had made us for each other, would have brought us together never to part again. Perhaps you would have felt — for your soul, though too ardent, is honest — how necessary I was to you

through the very need that I have of you. Perhaps you would have ceased to reproach yourself, as you have sometimes done in moments of calmness and justice, for not being happy though loved as you were by me.

But — you are no more; I am alone in the universe! Nothing remains to me but the dreadful consolation of those who have no other, — that melancholy which likes to drink its tears and shed them without seeking others to share its gloom. Adieu, my dear Julie, adieu; for these eyes, which I would gladly close forever, are filled with tears as I write these lines, and can see no longer the paper on which I write them.

LETTERS

FROM THE KING OF PRUSSIA, VOLTAIRE, AND D'ALEMBERT, ON THE DEATH OF MLLE. DE LESPINASSE.

From the King of Prussia to d'Alembert.

POTSDAM, July 9, 1776.

I SYMPATHIZE with your misfortune in losing a person to whom you were attached. The wounds of the heart are the keenest of all; and in spite of the fine maxims of philosophers, nothing but time will cure them. Man is an animal more feeling than reasonable. I have experienced, to my sorrow and only too well, what one suffers from such losses. The best remedy is to compel one's self against one's will to distract the mind from sorrowful ideas, which would otherwise root too deeply in the soul. It is well to choose a geometric occupation which requires application, and so put aside as best we can the dreadful ideas that ceaselessly return and must be evaded as much as possible. I propose to you the best remedy that is known to me. Cicero, to console himself for the death of his dear Tullia, threw himself into composition, and wrote many treatises, some of which have come down to us. Our reason is too weak to conquer the pain of a mortal wound; we must grant something to nature, and say to ourselves, especially at your age and mine, that we ought to be comforted by the thought that it cannot be long before we rejoin the ones we regret.

I accept with pleasure the hope you give me of coming to spend some months of the following year with me. If I can,

I will efface from your mind the sad and melancholy ideas that this fatal event has put there. We will philosophize together on the nothingness of life, on the folly of men, on the vanity of stoicism and of all our being. These are inexhaustible topics with which to compose many in-folios. Nevertheless, I beg you to make all the efforts of which you are capable to prevent the excess of pain from injuring your health, about which I interest myself too much to think of it with indifference.

D'Alembert to the King of Prussia.

PARIS, August 15, 1776.

My soul and pen have no expression to testify to your Majesty the deep and tender gratitude with which the letter you have deigned to write to me has filled me, — a letter so full of truth and interest, feeling and reason combined. Permit me, Sire, this expression of friendship — for why should I not venture to use with a great king the word which makes that great king so dear to my heart? I should not have delayed a moment in replying to this fresh mark, so touching for me, of the kindness with which your Majesty honours me, and in reiterating to you more warmly than ever the expression of feelings which I owe to you, if that expression would not have drawn me, in spite of myself, into fresh paroxysms of sorrow; which your Majesty would doubtless have pardoned, but which might have troubled the sweet and proper satisfaction which your Majesty is now enjoying. The newspapers announce the visit of the Grand-duke of Russia to Berlin, and the union that you are about to contract with that young prince, so worthy, it is said, for his rare qualities, to unite himself with you. [The Grand-duke Paul married the niece of Frederick the Great.] I have waited for his departure to pour my soul once more into that

of your Majesty, and above all to return you thanks for a letter which is so little that of a king that it is all the more precious and dear to me.

Your Majesty has no need to tell me that you have "felt to your sorrow, and only too well, what we suffer in losing that which we love." It can be seen, Sire, that you have experienced that cruel anguish by the feeling and truthful manner in which you speak to an afflicted heart and tell it that which is best adapted to its deplorable condition. All my friends are seeking, like you, to comfort me; they all tell me, like you, to distract my mind, but none have thought to add, as you have done, that "our reason is too weak to conquer the pain of a mortal wound; we must grant something to nature and say to ourselves, especially at your age and mine, that it will not be long before we rejoin the object of our affections." Alas! Sire, that is the only hope that comforts me, or rather, which makes me able to endure the few remaining days I have to live. . . .

I wrote a few years since to your Majesty, at a time when my frail body was daily growing feebler, that I desired nothing more upon my tomb than a stone with these words: "The Great Frederick honoured him with his kindness and his benefits." That stone and those words are to-day more than ever my desire: life, fame, even study, all have become indifferent and tasteless to me; I feel nothing but the solitude of my soul, the void in my life. My brain, fatigued and almost exhausted by forty years of profound meditation, is to-day deprived of the resource which has so often soothed my troubles. I am left alone, abandoned to my melancholy; and nature, blighted for me, offers me no object of attachment, nor even one of occupation.

But, Sire, why talk to you of my woes when you have to comfort those of so many others? . . .

The King of Prussia to d'Alembert.

POTSDAM, September 7, 1776.

Your letter, my dear d'Alembert, reached me on my return from Silesia. I see that your tender heart is still sensitive, and I do not blame you. The powers of our souls have their limits, and we must exact nothing from them that is not possible. If a very strong and robust man were required to upset the Louvre by applying his shoulder, he could not do it; but give him a stone of a hundred pounds to move, and the result is certain. It is the same thing with reason; it can conquer obstacles proportioned to its strength, but there are others that force it to give way. Nature has made us feeling; philosophy can never make us do the impossible: and suppose it could, that would be harmful to society; the result would be no compassion for the troubles of others; the human species would end in becoming hard and pitiless. Reason ought to serve us in moderating whatever is excessive in us, but not in destroying the human being in the man.

Therefore regret your loss, my dear friend; I will even add that the losses of friendship are irreparable; and that whoever is capable of appreciating things as they are must judge you worthy of having true friends because you know how to love.

But as it is above the powers of man, and even of the gods, to change the past, you ought to try to preserve yourself for the friends who remain to you, in order not to cause them the mortal grief of losing you. I have had friends, both men and women; I have lost five or six, and I thought to die of my grief. By a mere chance these losses fell upon me during the different wars in which I have been engaged, — a time in which I was continually obliged to

make and change my arrangements. Those inevitable distractions did, perhaps, prevent me from succumbing to my grief. I strongly wish that some very difficult problem to solve could be proposed to you, which would force you to think of other things. There is, in truth, no remedy but that and time. We are like rivers that keep their name while their waters are forever changing. When a part of the molecules that compose us are replaced by others, the memory of objects which gave us pleasure or grief is weakened, because, really, we are not the same men, time is renewing us incessantly. This is a thought for the unhappy, and every one who thinks ought to make use of it.

I rejoiced for myself at the thought of seeing you here, and now I rejoice for you; you will see new objects and other persons. I warn you that I shall do all that depends on me to take from your memory whatever may remind you of sad and grievous things, and I shall feel as much joy in tranquillizing your mind as I do in winning a battle. Not that I think myself a great philosopher, but because I have an unhappy experience of the state in which you are, and I feel I am in that way better fitted than others to tranquillize you. Come, then, my dear d'Alembert; be sure of being well received, and of finding, not perfect remedies for your sorrows, but lenitives and anodynes.

D'Alembert to the King of Prussia.

PARIS, October 7, 1776.

Sire, very violent and continual headaches which for three weeks have prevented me from writing and thinking and are the sad result of my mental condition, have seemed to me the more cruel because they have not permitted me to reply sooner to the letter which your Majesty has written to me about my grief. What a letter, Sire! and how few — I do

not say kings, for they know not such language, but — friends would know how to speak as you do to an oppressed and suffering soul! I read and reread daily a letter so fitted to soothe my trouble; I have read it to my friends who are, like me, full of gratitude to your Majesty, and I say to myself as I read it, and after reading it, "That great prince is right," but I continue, nevertheless, to grieve. Your Majesty must not be surprised or give up hope of my cure, though I myself see none as yet. Objects of deep study would be the only means of bringing it about; your Majesty suggests with as much kindness as wisdom that powerful remedy; but my poor brain is no longer capable of using it. It is to time alone that I can look for some relief to my distress; and I fear that cruel time will destroy rather than cure me.

The comparison that your Majesty makes between our unhappy individuality and the rivers which ever change though preserving their names, is as ingenious as it is philosophical, and explains with as much reason as wit why time should console us; but at present, Sire, my sad river feels only the pain of flowing, and sees no hope of a peaceful and happier current. If I were twenty-five years younger I might perhaps have the happiness of forming another attachment which would make life endurable to me; but, Sire, I am nearly sixty years of age, and at that time of life we cannot replace the friends we have the misfortune to lose. I feel this the more at this moment in an afflicting manner through a fresh loss with which I am threatened. . . . An excellent woman, full of intelligence and virtue, . . . Mme. Geoffrin, who for thirty years has shown me the tenderest friendship, and who quite recently has given to my sorrow all the consolations and distractions that her friendship could imagine, has been struck down with paralysis. . . . I thus lose in the

space of a few months the two persons I loved best and by whom I was best loved. There, Sire, is the sorrowful condition in which I am, my heart dejected and withered, and I myself not knowing what to do with my soul or my time.

Voltaire to d'Alembert.

June 10, 1776.

This is the moment, my dear friend, when philosophy is very necessary to you. I have heard very late, and not through you, of the loss you have met with. Here is your whole life changed. It will be very difficult to accustom yourself to such a privation. They tell me that the lodging you have in the Louvre is very gloomy. I fear for your health. Courage serves for combat, but it does not serve to console us, or make us happy. . . .

D'Alembert to Voltaire.

June 24, 1776.

I did not tell you of my misfortune, my very dear and worthy master, first, because I had not the strength to write, and next, because I was sure that our mutual friends would tell you of it.

I shall not feel the help of philosophy until nature succeeds in restoring to me the sleep and the appetite I have lost. My life and my soul are in the void; the abyss of doubts in which I am seems to me bottomless. I try to shake myself, to distract myself, but hitherto without success. I have not been able to occupy my mind during the last month since this dreadful sorrow, except with a Eulogy which I read to the Academy at La Harpe's reception. . . . But that success has only increased my affliction, because it will be unknown forever to my unhappy friend, who would have taken such interest in it.

Adieu, my dear master; when my poor soul is calmer, less blighted, I will speak to you of other griefs which we share in common; but at this moment they are stifled by a sorrow more keen, more piercing. Take care of your health and continue to love *tuum ex animo.*

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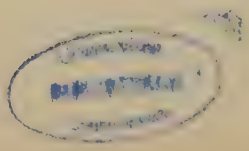

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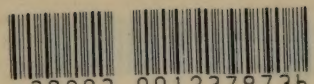
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